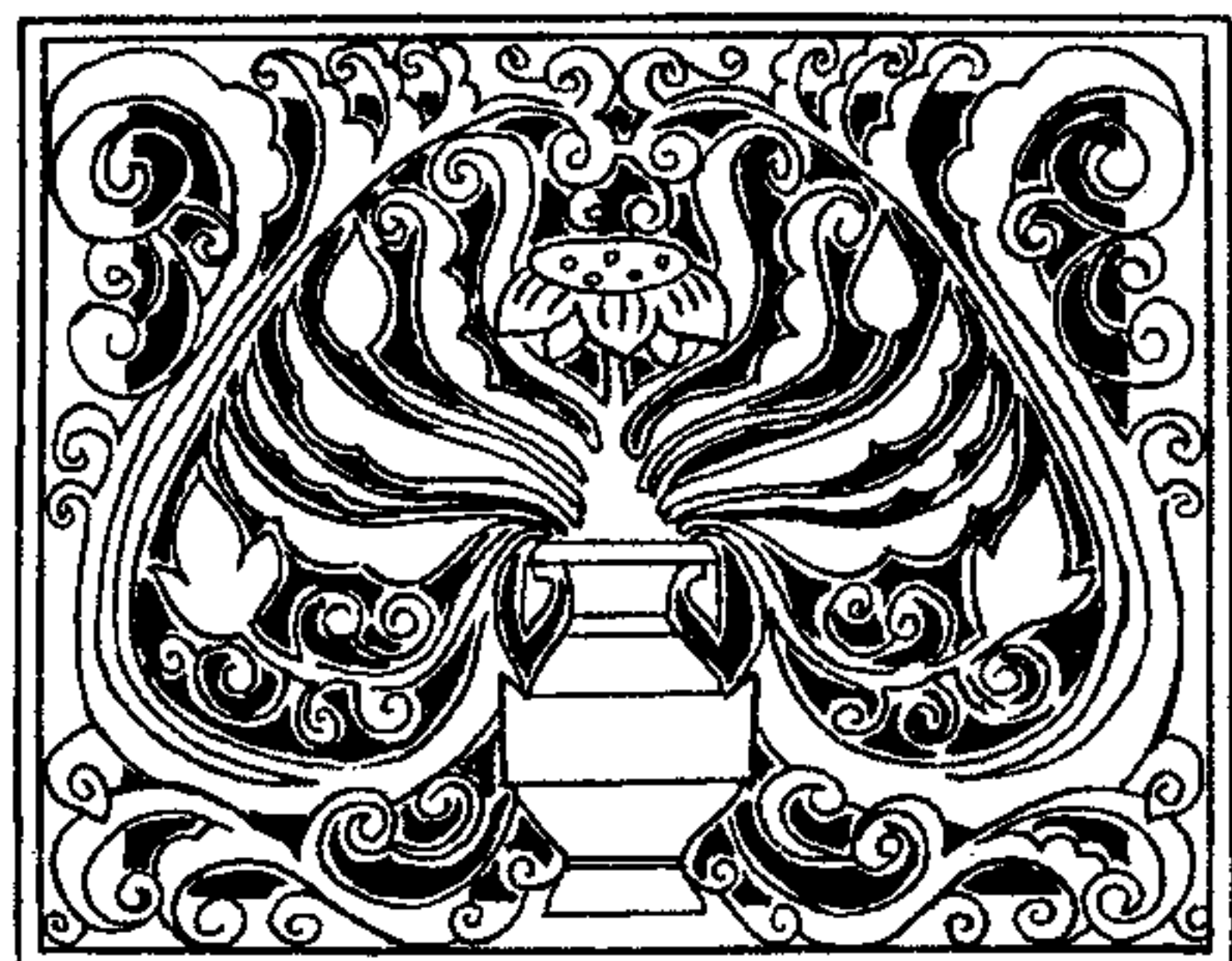




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*Cover: A view of the Himalayas
from Nepal*

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उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 101

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No. 10

Divine Wisdom

DISPASSION AND FREEDOM

भुक्तभोगा परित्यक्ता दृष्टदोषा च नित्यशः।
नेश्वरस्याशुभं धत्ते स्वे महिम्नि स्थितस्य च॥

The jiva (individual self) who has experienced the joys and sorrows provided by Nature (body-mind), has abandoned them as utterly worthless, and has established himself in the glory of the supreme Being, is never again obsessed by Nature.

यथा ह्यप्रतिबुद्धस्य प्रस्वापो बहूनर्थभृत्।
स एव प्रतिबुद्धस्य न वै मोहाय कल्पते॥

The dreams experienced by a sleeping person can cause him much unpleasantness. But when he is awakened, they trouble him no more.

एवं विदिततत्त्वस्य प्रकृतिर्मयि मानसम्।
युञ्जतो नापकुरुत आत्मारामस्य कर्हिचित्॥

In the same way Nature cannot harm a person who has known the Truth regarding the unaffected Atman and whose mind is

always united with Me and delights in Me, the supreme Spirit.

यदैवमध्यात्मरतः कालेन बहुजन्मना।
सर्वत्र जातवैराग्य आब्रह्मभुवनान्मुनिः॥

Through such absorption in spiritual practices for a very long time, covering several births, the aspirant develops intense dispassion for everything up to and including the highest heaven.

मद्भक्तः प्रतिबुद्धार्थो मत्प्रसादेन भूयसा।
निःश्रेयसं स्वसंस्थानं कैवल्यारख्यं मदाश्रयम्॥

Then by My unbounded grace, such a devotee becomes aware of the Truth, and attains in this life itself to that state of Blessedness which is founded in Me and is called Kaivalya, which consists in the establishment of oneself in one's real nature.

—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 3.27.24-28

Scriptural Study and Swamiji's Four A's

This discussion may be useful only to some: i. those who have recently entered the spiritual path and so would like to know what to study for guidance, and ii. those who, after years on the path, now feel stagnated and also find that religious books are not giving them the inspiration they once gave—'These days I don't feel like reading any more. Books appear dry and I feel drowsy after reading for a time. But I like to see religious TV programmes or listen to bhajans etc.' To both these Swamiji has something practical to offer.

K.S. Ramaswami Sastri, son of Prof. K. Sundararama Iyer, the tutor to Prince Martanda Varma of Travancore, had the good fortune of meeting Swamiji towards the end of 1892 at Trivandrum. In his reminiscences he has saved for us a very valuable instruction from Swamiji:

On yet another day Swamiji told me, 'You are still a young boy. I hope and wish that some day you will reverentially study the Upanishads, the *Brahma-Sūtras*, and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, which are known as the *prasthāna-traya* (the three supreme sources of Truth), as also the *itihāsas*, the *purāṇas* and the *āgamas*. You will not find the like of all these anywhere else in the world. Man alone, out of all living beings, has a hunger in his heart to know the whence and whither, the whys and wherefores of things. There are four key words which you must remember, viz. *abhaya* (fearlessness), *ahiṃsā* (non-injury), *asaṅga* (non-attachment), and *ānanda* (bliss). These words really sum up the essence of all our sacred books. Remember them. Their im-

plication will become clear to you later on.'¹

The why of study

Now, we all know in a general way the *why* of these studies—how it helps us to keep our mind safe from utter worldliness, and so on. But what Swamiji's advice above gives is the *how*. Before we enlarge upon this, however, to grasp its practical significance, we shall go over some aspects of the question why.

For instance, we must have experienced that scriptural study is a sort of cleansing of our minds after each day's work. Using Sri Ramakrishna's similes, just as a tamed elephant is given a bath after its hectic daily work, or just as people have their daily bath in the Ganga, so does our mind get refreshed when it is habituated to regular study and discussion.

Almost every Vedanta book and teacher have emphasized that habit. In fact, sage Nāka appears to have gone so far as to say (*Taittirīya-Upaniṣad*, 1.9.1) that we may very well be disciplining ourselves through righteousness, truthfulness, austerities, control of our senses and mind, ritualistic worship, hospitality, fulfilling our family/social obligations by bringing up good and responsible children and grandchildren, and so on; still, study and mutual enrichment through discussions about Atman, Brahman, God, life, death, social goals, purpose of human life, values, etc. are the thing: *svādh-*

1. *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*, by his Eastern and Western Admirers (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1964), p. 108.

inyāya-pravacane-veti nāko maudgalyah; taddhi tapaḥ, taddhi tapaḥ—study and discussion alone, study and discussion alone; they indeed are the greatest self-disciplines.

That is almost like saying that the other disciplines become fruitful only through continuous learning and sharing it with others—one lamp lighting more lamps.

But sage Nāka's instruction may appear strange. For how can learning and exchange of views be weightier than truthfulness, sense-control, etc.? However, on further thought, the implication of the sage's words becomes clear: all those self-regulations, including those followed in our umpteen mundane activities (meant by 'bringing up children and grandchildren'), become rightly understood and performed provided our intellect is kept keen and developing through lifelong systematic study and discussion.

'Rightly understood and performed'—what does that convey? Simply this—when backed by a constantly questioning and learning mind, our disciplines bring about a gradual expansion and transformation of our consciousness; finally we reach our spiritual goal. Put another way—our present understanding of how to apply our spiritual ideals and derive fulfillment and joy is mostly determined by our present psychological and social conditions/levels. But these change with time, and then we hunger to know how to bring our ideal to bear on our new conditions. So our intellectual clarity, our spiritual light, received from books must be made to keep pace with our changes—if we are not to throw away our spiritual values into our mind's attic as irrelevant.

If we stick to study and discussion, we discover newer, deeper and effective meaning in the scriptures. But if we are careless

about study etc., all our disciplines—ritualistic prayer, hospitality, etc.—, which are really meant for **growth** are likely to end up as lifeless routines, social conventions. Raft-like, just enough to prevent us from sinking into downright worldliness, just enough to give us the consolation that we are (considered to be) good people in society. So intellectual clarity makes our disciplines come alive, become adaptive and progressive instead of remaining somnolent.

Elsewhere too in the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* (1.11.1) a teacher gives this parting instruction to his students as they are about to return home and to society after several years of study under him: *svādhyāyān-mā-pramadaḥ*—do not neglect your studies. The *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* (8.15.1) shows how study, besides steering a person to the most fulfilling end of human life—self-knowledge, helps him run a family that is enlightened and happy, and thus contribute to building a similar society:

...*ācārya-kulād-vedam-adhītya-yathā-vidhānam...abhisamāvṛtya kuṭumbe śucau deśe svādhyāyam-adhīyāno dhārmikān-vidadhad-ātmani sarvendriyāṇi sampratiṣṭhāpya-ahiṃsan sarvā-bhūtāni...sa khalu-evam vartayan-yāvadāyusam brahmalokam-abhisampadyate na ca punar-āvartate na ca punar-āvartate.*

Having studied the Vedas in the teacher's house in accordance with the rules...he returns home and takes up the duties of a householder. Here he continues to study the scriptures in a **clean and sacred place**, and makes his children *dhārmika* (noble, upright and energetic). (While in this householder's state) he keeps his mind and senses established in the Atman (that is, he allows them to function strictly in accordance with the fact of his being divine; he trains them to be motivated only by the highest spiri-

tual values he has imbibed through Vedic study). (Thus living in society) he does no harm to anything or anybody. Continuing thus through his span of life, he finally realizes Brahman. He does not return, he does not return (that is, he gets freed from the chain of transmigration).

What is worth noting in the above text is, 'in a clean and sacred place' implies more than the superficial meaning that he goes and sits in a holy place for his studies; or that before he sits down to study he cleans the place; or that he sanctifies it through some mantras, or some such thing. The deeper significance must be—on the strength of character he built during his studies under his teacher, his house now acquires a holy and harmonious atmosphere, fit to rear worthy children; and that, by continuing with his scriptural studies, by heightening the intellectual or value level in his house, he *makes* the whole house a sacred resort. This is the social dimension of study.

The how of study

What we have said so far are some of the reasons for the *why* of study. Next comes the question *how*—how best to study the scriptures etc. so that it complements the *why*? Most of us have some method, for sure, but possibly many go about it in a haphazard way—picking up to read just anything that appeals at the moment. May be some take notes...and notes...and notes, till these become as large as books and create storage problems and index-to-the-notes problem. Some take notes on topics not relevant now (—samadhi, Brahman, Atman...); some of information and quotations, may be with a view to the future—scholarship, research, lectures and writing books.

All these methods have some 'nutrition' value, no doubt. But how to study for maximum spiritual benefit to oneself? The answer is—by relating study to our being,

our life. Is this not the same as saying, 'Mere study will not do. One must put into practice what the books teach'? Yes, broadly speaking. But what we are driving at is that this 'broadly speaking' needs focus for better assimilation, because each scripture deals with such a bewildering array of ideas and instructions. These in fact are meant for different persons at different levels and situations. So *how* are we to identify just what we should put into practice? That is, what exactly should we, *all* spiritual aspirants, keep specially looking for?

Sri Ramakrishna's answer is well known—we should pay attention particularly to those portions that kindle and nourish bhakti and discrimination—between what takes us towards God and what does not. What Swamiji has added is *abhaya* etc., quoted. Meaning that, from the mass of scriptural instructions, we should gather especially those that inculcate these four qualities—the four pillars of a complete life. Conversely, over a time study should bear fruit by imbuing us with those qualities. Otherwise study was shallow.

These four A's (*abhaya*, *ahimsa*, *asanga*, *ananda*) must be experienced progressively by every spiritual aspirant. Without these, study and even its equally (more?) important counterpart, japa, meditation, etc., as also our social life become tasteless, a sigh beneath our smiles. We become like jellyfishes bobbing on the ocean of life—forms without personalities, prey to swinging moods and all sorts of weaknesses and anxieties.

What the four are

Now let us take a look at those four. One point stands out: Whether Swamiji meant it or not we cannot say, but it seems that *ananda*, spiritual *ananda*, is the culmination of the other three, the proof that we studied and practised well.

And as regards the order of importance among the four, it is no wonder Swamiji has listed *abhaya* first. For, as his life and teachings show, he held it as the primary test to determine whether one has even entered the portals of religion. In the context of spiritual life, this fearlessness is not that of a wicked person, a physically strong person, or a soldier. True, Swamiji has gone to the extent of saying that the daring of even such persons is better than what commonly goes as humility or modesty. Still, *abhaya* here is that which is independent of external support—muscles, money, weapons, or others' backing, and is born of the conviction that one is a child of God or that one is the Atman. This conviction grows through repeated study of the scriptures, especially those mentioned by Swamiji.

Does this conviction translate by itself into fearlessness in life? No, in the beginning one has to will it—will to be fearless. Consider how even a timid rural youth is transformed into a 'bash on regardless' soldier. Will is the key. He is trained to will how not to fear. As one more example, take the 'ability to say "no"' to really undesirable and distasteful things or people. Many suffer for want of this ability. But once the initial hesitation and fears and anxieties are broken—by simply *willing* so the first few times, the door opens for our convictions and personality to express. Then we suddenly find a flood of unknown strength, self-confidence and inner light rushing up from within us. And time teaches us the intricacies of how to use this power to say 'yes' or 'no' according to *our* wisdom. Gradually it becomes natural and mature, devoid of the initial tensions.

So with fearlessness. The early phase of uncertainty, failure, strain, and so on disappears, giving place to a natural state of *abhaya* in which one feels closer to one's conscience, closer to God, closer to one's nature

as Atman. The willed practice of fearlessness or non-dependence gives life and clarity to our convictions and this in turn strengthens will, slowly dispelling the haze of vascillations and suppressed ideals/aspirations around our spiritual core. This enlivened conviction, 'I am a spiritual being free from all wants physical and mental' takes away every form of fear of competition, loss, defeat, threat, injury, and even death.

The two closely associated feelings, 'I need have no anxieties and fears' and 'I have no wants', are what nurture the other three A's. No wants, no competition, no competitor or adversary, no fear. Which further means that the more we grow in the Atman-inspired state of fearlessness the lesser are our wants. Conversely, to the extent we *will* to reduce our wants and affirm the scriptural teaching that we are the wantless Atman, our fearlessness increases.

This fearlessness as the primary test and condition for spiritual growth is not only Swamiji's teaching. In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, as Swamiji also has pointed out, Sri Krishna begins to shake Arjuna out of his despondency by first talking about fearlessness and the Atman. Later, in the sixteenth chapter, too, *abhaya* is first in the list of divine qualities—that is, qualities noticeable in a person who has gone far in discovering one's divine individuality, and qualities which one desiring to discover one's divinity should strive to cultivate.

To be sure, *ahimsa* and *asanga* too are to be willed into practise by us from the beginning. But that is best possible only when one is fearless. No undue wants, no fear or anxiety, no enemy (—put positively, feeling of spiritual kinship with all), no resentment, no desire to retaliate—physically or even mentally. Not even hatred or jealousy. Positively, we try to feel others' pain or joy as of someone our own. Hence, since a perfectly

fearless person takes no defensive action of any kind—finds it unnecessary, feels no urge for it—, *himsa* is impossible.

Here, however, we should take note that, as a pragmatic measure, remembering the state of the masses and the facts of daily life, Swamiji has said elsewhere, 'self-defence for the householder, absolute non-violence for the monk'. That is, in the case of one responsible for one's family and, by extension, in the context of the social realities seen down the ages, a blanket prescription of *ahimsa* on one and all is absurd. One must take unspiteful, reasonable and lawful protective measures. Even physical, when necessary, as Manu has put it strongly (*Manu-Smṛti*, 8.350—1):

(Any one of) these six are *āta-tāyins*: One who sets fire to the house of, administers poison to, falls with a sword upon, steals the wealth, land or wife of, another person.

On seeing an *āta-tāyin* approach, one should kill him without second thoughts. No sin whatever befalls one for killing an *āta-tāyin*.

Next fearlessness and the absence of the feeling of want are logically accompanied by *asanga*, non-attachment: No wants, no fear, no perception of threat to one's existence (since one is immortal as the Atman), no reason for drawing to oneself particular

people or things for self-preservation, no selfish attachment, (negatively, not even aversion for people and things normally perceived to be adverse to one's interests).

Finally, in the absence of fear, jealousy, violence, etc., and selfish attachment—the principal distractors and tension-builders of our mind, robbers of our peace, *ananda* must come as a matter of course. For, *ananda* is not something to be practised or willed as in the case of the other three—it is a state brought on by the other three, its degree depending on that of our mastery over the first three.

This in brief is the significance of Swamiji's instruction. Regular scriptural study, with special attention to the A's, clears the intellectual cobwebs and imparts steady spiritual vigour to our life. Our personality discovers its abiding nourishment. We find ways to drain out anxieties, tension, etc., and to replace them with *ananda*. Describing the perfection of this process, the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* says:

Na bibhēti kadācaneti...na bibhēti kutaścaneti: One who knows the bliss that is Brahman never fears...He does not become afraid of anything.

Ānandī bhavati, he becomes blissful.

So, *tejasvi nau-adhītam-astu*, may our study be vigorous and effective. □

True equality consists in treating unequally unequal things.

—Aristotle

समाऽसमाभ्यां विषमसमे पूजातः॥

Samā'samābhyaṃ viṣama-same pūjātaḥ.

One incurs demerit by honouring unequals equally, or by honouring equals unequally.

—Gautama-Smṛti, 17.20

The Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

Worship of Divine Principles

The second *khaṇḍa* (Section, Canto) of the first chapter deals with the *karma-kāṇḍa* (work portion) of the Vedas, which must be understood, for we are not yet conversant with the background of the Upaniṣadic stand and do not yet know what message for our everlasting welfare is in the mind of the teacher. Further, the development of thought among the ancient thinkers started with the observation of natural phenomena and their cosmic rhythm. So religious thought started with nature worship, for they knew that if the forces of nature are not kind to us we will be destroyed, whereas if they are kind on their being propitiated, we will prosper and live in harmony. They thought that there must be some guiding principles underlying nature which manage natural phenomena. These were named and prayed to for being benign to men. Their prayers were to the effect: our existence depends upon you; if we have made mistakes, please do not take them to heart but ever remain kind and compassionate. The *devatās* (gods identified with natural phenomena) were not those which are now idolized, but they indicated effulgence, knowledge, strength and control. Knowledge and strength are inseparable, and our ancestors knew that our existence depended upon the benign compassion of these effulgent gods who balanced their knowledge and strength with self-control.

The next thought that came to the mind of the ancients was: of the many elements in nature, to whom do I pray? If someone does not listen to me, I go to the chief. So they

started thinking who could be the most important God among those many gods. The concept of many gods is polytheism, and at different times Indra or Parjanya or some other god was held to be supreme. Questions were also asked in the *Kena* and *Praśna-Upaniṣads* about the supreme ruler of *internal* nature under whose dictate the mind and the senses move and function. This phase of the search for the supreme Lord among the gods is known as henotheism.

Philosophically speaking, this was a search for the source of one energy from which all the natural phenomena derive their strength. Slowly the concept of *Prajāpati*, *Brahmā*, the father (*pati*) of the flock (*prajā*), came up. This concept later gave way to that of *Parameśvara*. This phase of thought is characterized as monotheism: there was a single source of knowledge and power, the Lord of the whole group, by whose order every member of the group, moved in a particular rhythmic manner.

Supreme Being and the Mahāvākyas

The next development was the effort to define *Parameśvara*. If the conviction is firm that this world is a manifestation of the Divine, then it follows that we must practise the presence of that Divine in ourselves and in the world. In the *R̥g-Veda* the question was asked: 'Who are you? Are you male or female in form?' In this search a magnificent discovery took place that, neither could It be *kumāra* (male) nor *kumārī* (female), but an inexplicable entity beyond all ideas of sex; It is beyond all relative conceptions.

Thus the idea of Atman or Brahman was slowly arrived at in an intelligent and rational manner. After innumerable questions were posed and great efforts in deep meditation made, they found answers—they discovered Brahman. The root of this word is *br̥h* meaning vast, limitless, beyond the capacity of the limited human mind to grasp. Brahman the Absolute was found to be the source of this universe.

But another question which troubled them next was their own relationship with Brahman, since 'I' comes into the picture as the perceiving part of the perceived universe. The question was put: 'Ko'ham? Who am I?' This intellectual examination of the world within was similar to the journey without. The *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* found the 'I' to be not this body, because the linguistic usage viz., 'my body', shows that the body is something I possess, and 'I', the possessor, is not identical with the body, i.e. what is possessed. Similarly, 'I' is not identical with the senses or limbs, being parts of the body. These are all appendages, not the Self.

This study led to the awareness, 'I am'. Existence (*Sat*) is there and awareness (*Cit*) of it as '*Aham asmi* (I am)' is there. The third aspect of the Self discovered was that if I am not disturbed by the turmoil of desires, I feel a tremendous inner joy (*Ānanda*) within me. Thus the nature of the Self was discovered to be '*Sat-Cit-Ānanda*'. The next question was: 'If Brahman is the essence of the universe and the Atman is my own essence, could these two be different?' They took the bold step of equating the two by realizing '*ayam-ātmā-Brahma*, this Atman is Brahman', '*aham Brahma-asmi*, I am Brahman'. This final conclusion was not only intellectual but a matter of experience of those thinkers.

The equation was arrived at and expressed in the *mahāvākyas*. But along with it the process of appeasing the phenomena

of nature went on. One group of thinkers said that '*ayam-ātmā-Brahma*' is the only solution to our problems and so we shall meditate on that. The other group—equally intelligent—preferred activity and so chose to appease the various sources of energy in the universe through sacrifices. Thus the Vedas contain the section on *karma-kāṇḍa* dealing with sacrifices as well as the section on *jñāna-kāṇḍa*, known as the Upaniṣads, dealing with Knowledge.

The Hope for the Ritualists

The second *kāṇḍa* (section) handles the *karma-kāṇḍa* of the Vedas. Sri Rama-krishna used to say that a mother gives to each of her children the food best digested by it. Similarly the mother-like Vedas give all types of food so that each can take according to one's capacity. They are for everyone, regardless of intellectual achievement, temperament and constitution. They understand that all do not belong to the same type—some are more oriented towards action and not satisfied with just meditation.

These Ritualists enunciated a code of life and conduct involving *yajña*, *yāga*—sacrifices and offerings—an innumerable number of good deeds capable of creating *adr̥ṣṭa*, an invisible psychological moral force. They chalked out a programme for the whole day and for the whole of life of a person. These duties were to create the infallible momentum, *adr̥ṣṭa*, so that after death one would have a happy life in heaven or in other *lokas* (worlds).

By contrast, the Meditators said that this aspiring for a reward after death is a day-dream. Instead one should strive to have immortal bliss in this very life: '*Jīvan-mukti-sukhaprāpti-hetave janma-dhāraṇam*, I am born not to wait till death but to experience the bliss of the Atman or Brahman in this very life.' It is irrational to invest energies in something which will happen in an

after-death existence. The Ritualists' retort is, 'You can dream of Atman or Brahman you hope to reach in this life or at the end of many lives. But I will invest in building up *adrṣṭa* by good deeds.

This section of the *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad* deals with the *karma-kāṇḍa* of the Vedas, which was later developed and called the *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā*, in opposition to the *Uttara-Mīmāṃsā* which deals with the *jñāna-kāṇḍa*. *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā* is specifically meant for people who believe that they are born to perform duties of life in such a manner as to create their own destiny in the shape of *adrṣṭa*, the sum of *karma-phala* (fruits of action), which gives them eternal life in heaven. It is a very important section of the Vedas because all men are not introspective but are by nature active, and strive to do something concrete in which they find happiness.

The section on *karma-kāṇḍa* gives top-most importance to the human desire for activity and performance of duty. Action is physical and mental—while we perform rituals, mentally we have to coordinate our activities according to the dictates of the *śāstras*. Intellectually we have to be tuned to understand 'what', 'how' and 'why' we are doing it. These three combine to lead us to the truth of life. So *karma* is also true. This section deals with such non-contemplative people. They, too, following this method, come to understand in due course that this *karma*, activity, is meant to cleanse the heart and make one competent to be a meditative type of person.

It is a common failing to compare things and brand something as good and superior and other things as bad and inferior. We jump to such conclusions too quickly. The Upaniṣad should not be studied with this attitude of *better* or *lower*, because they are solely interested in helping

human beings to qualitatively improve their personalities till they reach the goal of oneness with the Divine. The *jñāna-mārgi* is introspective and meditative, and with great will-power plucks out the thought of distinction and brings in the thought of unity in diversity. The other kind of person considers this a day-dream and a woolly-headed idea, much beyond him, and regards himself as realistic and pragmatic, a man of the world, who wants to work and wants something in return for the duties performed.

This part of the Upaniṣad is for such people. How they will move from gross rituals to subtle thoughts will be told later. The Vedas find a method for common people for whom the flights of *parā-vidyā* go over their heads; neither can they live up to the exacting standard of a *tyāgi* (renunciate). There is no need for despair. One should start life from where one is and slowly evolve to equip oneself for the practice of *parā-vidyā*, not only through one's intellect but through one's conduct also.

Various aspects of philosophical thinking have been highlighted. In the first *khaṇḍa* was narrated how this wisdom was acquired and handed down from generation to generation. The human approach to resolve the mysteries of external and internal nature have been referred to as *aparā* and *parā-vidyās*. The second *khaṇḍa* now covers the *aparā-vidyā*, its performance, methodology, purpose and goal. It is relevant to the knowledge of nature. So far the teacher has only mentioned the term *aparā-vidyā*; now he will tell precisely what it is, its character, performance and result, whether or not the result is permanent and leads to our desired goal. Here *karma-kāṇḍa* and its philosophy are taken up—it is based on *karma* and its fruit. The inviolable law of cause and effect has been given great importance. If we perform the prescribed *karmanas*, then we will be

(continued on page 589)

Nanda, The Pariah Saint

(Continued from the previous issue)

No deer that newly escaped from the hunter's toils, no Negro slave newly emancipated, no barren women just blessed with a male child, no blindman that newly received the gift of light, was more rejoiced than Nanda the *pariah* who was relieved from the work which stood between him and his God. Nay, the very gods in heaven rejoiced to see Nanda dancing across the grassy plains and fertile meadows as if he were a wolf springing upon his victim, eager to spring upon that victim of victims, Natarāja, the poorest of the poor, the poor Minākshī's¹ mother's son-in-law, and singing:

The drug² that cures my grief,
the fear-not-drug,
The drug that spreads through
all the worlds alike,
The medicine of grace, the wondrous
drug
That grows within, the drug that
feasts my love;
The drug of growing light, the drug
of life
And light and bliss, the drug that
cures the ill
Of life, the drug great and ineffable,

The drug that saves the pain of death,
the sweet
Ambrosia that flows ever within.

*Natarāja, Natarāja, Natarāja, Natarāja.
Natarāja, my Lord, Natarāja, Natarāja,
Natarāja, my wealth, Natarāja, Natarāja,
Natarāja, Natarāja, Nartanasundara,
Natarāja.*

The gods are never more pleased than when they see a good soul springing frantic, 'pregnant with celestial fire', for theirs is the world of love. The story adds, the earth shook with joy, the grass waved with delight and a few rain drops of joy fell from heaven. Nanda sang and jumped like a veritable deer. He jumped with delight. His eyes and ears were hardly his. He was beside himself, intoxicated with delight. Snakes alone can know snakes' legs. So lovers alone can know the bliss of love. Nanda danced and wept; to him who was able to gather up the harvest of a thousand acres in a few hours, the walk from Ādhanur to the banks of the Colladam (the river Coleroon) was hardly a walk.

The river was in full flood. The waves were rolling forth one after another for very joy, as it were. There was a weird majesty about the waters as they flowed on, in some places moving without self-control like a drunkard who has lost his senses and is reeling about, in others rushing forth like a wild lion shaking his mane, in others moving and rolling like a bull with a fat hump, and in others yet crawling like a mountain snake; but everywhere frantic with heavenly joy as if at the sight of the distant looming

1. There is a beautiful carving in stone in the temple at Madurai of Minākshī's, or Parvati's, mother grieving miserably for her rich daughter's having married Siva, the beggar, the poorest of the poor.
2. In these and the following verses the reader is requested to attend more to the sense than the metre. The original refuses to be translated.

tower of Chidambaram, and everywhere making a subdued harmonium or a loud organ Vedic music of its own

Nanda looked at the river, saw the deep water yet clear, saw the living flood and claimed eternal kinship with it. Railways were not in those days, and Nanda, had he seen a train, would have exclaimed, as a friend of the writer observed, 'Here is my God! carrying all to their respective destinations—without the distinction of age, sex, position, caste or creed, and propelled on and controlled by an invisible power and making a noise (whistle) like the *Pranavam*, the great AUM, and maintaining its world inside by that noise (*Sabda nishtam jagat*—the world stands by the power of sound or vibration).' Surely there is philosophy everywhere for the eyes that would see.

Nanda saw the majestic river, danced at the abundance of Natarāja that it bore. 'It danced and leapt,' he said, 'singing anthems to my beloved, and so I shall do', and he danced and jumped, singing and singing—

Natarāja's dance is dance,
And all our dance is ignorance.

and dancing eternal love to that eternal lover. A boat came; a black boatman steered it, with a sun-burnt face, with his face covered all over, the body but bearing the traces of the white ashes it wore and smelling of sweet camphor. Nanda saw him and worshipped him, for he was Natarāja in his eyes; and getting into the boat for hire, sang to a surprised audience about the unfading glory of the Prince of Dancers. He said—

The drug which made me Him, the
dancing drug
That dances in wisdom's sphere, the
silent drug
The poor man's friend, the rarest drug,
the drug

Both first and last, the drug that seeks
out those
That search for it, the drug all rare to
those
That seek it not, that which my hunger
soothes,
The loneliest drug, the pure man's
help, the light,
The pride of love, the drug that drives
out grief,
The drug that cures false loves and
avarice kills,
That which Earth-hunger soothes, the
drug which plays
Hide-and-seek, the drug which is all
within
The heart that loves, that is my strength
and joy.

Natarāja, Natarāja, Natarāja, Natarāja
Natarāja, Guru, Natarāja, Natarāja
Natarāja, Jewel, Natarāja, Natarāja,
Natarāja, Natarāja, Nartanasundara,
Natarāja.

The boat danced on the waters. Nanda danced on the boat. The people in the boat danced with Nanda. The sun-burnt boatman forgot his oar and danced with the people. It was a dance universal, an ecstatic festival, but a dance of ten minutes. The boat, dancing this way and that, dragged itself to the shore. Nanda leapt on the ground—sacred it was, it was the territory of Natarāja—, and put his hand to the cloth tucked around his waist searching for a few copper coins, the fruit of his toil (pockets were not in those days). But the boatman wept and would not take the hire. 'My master, my lord,' he said, 'no more a *pariah* are you, God has converted you into Himself. I am the *pariah*-slave and cannot accept anything from you.'

The great Dr. Johnson said of Burke, that if any man stayed with him for five minutes, say, to shelter from the rain or

against the wild bull, he could discover the orator, and so it was with Nanda. Ten minutes were the interval for crossing the river, and within that time the *Bhakta* was discovered and worshipped by a band of men who became his *Bhaktas*. The boatman left his boat. The man of business forgot it. The tradesman neglected his trade. The ploughman threw aside his plough. A dancing group formed itself. They danced, danced for very joy; danced like Natarāja around Nanda, the centre of the group.

The tower of Chidambaram, grand, majestic, loomed from a distance and seemed to say to Nanda—

O Come and dance, the joyous dance.
O Come and dance, the Dancer's dance.
O dance and shun all ignorance.

Nanda looked at it—the tower of Natarāja, bowed before it and, worshipping it, exclaimed, 'O lord, at whose bidding the spheres do their daily work, and the invisible sky like Thyself keeps on in space and envelops all, by the side of thy starry wealth and mountains and rivers where am I?—this poor mosquito. "This tiny trumpeting gnat" is not worth a drop of the mighty ocean that roars day and night. Is not that drop more innocent and beautiful than myself! The white sand that endures alike the burning sun and the falling rain is more worthy of thy grace than myself. Oh! *Sannyāsin* of *sannyāsins*! who rulest this vast household of suns, moons, stars, clouds, mountains and rivers, that I should have appeared as any thing in thine Eyes, ah, what a wonder! Grant, Oh! God of gods, rising from the Earth stand firm like this tower of thine, fixedly gazing towards heaven, turning a deaf ear and a bold front to all the winds that might blow.'

A few yards more they went till the base of the tower was visible. The temple

gate was in view. And Nanda sang: Here is the gate of Kailas, the gate that opens to the good alone, the gate from which no good man ever returns, that through which Mānikkar³ entered and sang to the echo of these high walls his divine anthems of ecstasy, the gate through which that poet of poets Appar³ entered and sang his majestic Vedas, the gate through which Sundarar³ entered and enjoyed the secret nuptials with the Prince of Lovers, the gate of that God who was feeding a prostitute's brother at the rate of one golden pie a day and finally absorbed him. My brother and friends and kinsmen, here God is and is not. Here he is both form and no-form. Here he dances and is quiet. Here it is that the ignorant are blessed with wisdom and the wise lose their senses. Here he is space and light. And here he is both the creator and the destroyer.' And that is why Appar sang—

The Tillai Dancer, wrapt by watery
fields
Around, this helpless slave to forget
and live!

Nanda continued:

In space his dance is held, my maids,⁴
His dance is love, his dance is love.
The foot that dances so I love,
I pine with love, I die, my maids.

All (in chorus):

Natarāja's dance, the scene
Where he dances lies all within.

Nanda:

A joyous form, a joyous form
I love his dance, my maids, I love,
He dances there, my maids, with love
His is, my maids, a joyous form.

3. Great Tamil saints and poets.

4. *Maid*—the mind is generally addressed as *maid*.

All:

Mahāsiva, Sadāsiva,
The crown of kings, the help of all,
Siva, Siva, Sadāsiva,
Siva that dances in the hall.

Nanda:

This wretched world, I scorn, my maids,
I am one with the Lord, my maids.
He passeth all my words, maids.
How could I speak, how,
Oh! my maids.

All:

The song that sings of space is song.
All other song is darksome song.
Natarāja's song is song all sweet.
The song of world is song for meat.

Nanda:

Seeth he not, my maids, my mind,
Alas! three eyes he hath, you find.
He melteth many a stony mind,
But Himself melteth not for me.
Deceit I know not, as you see,
My maids, what fault in me you find?

All:

The abandon of grace, my gain,
That gain's rich store, wealth
without pain,
Light's nectar, sweetness that
doth drown,
The gem adorning Veda's crown,
The gem adorning Veda's crown.

Thus singing they reached the sacred precincts of Chidambaram, danced around the village as if they were bees humming around the lotus that has not yet bared its bosom to the skies. The God within is the same God without, and prompted by Him that dwells within the heart, the *Dikshitar*s of Chidambaram (the holy priests of the temple, 2,999 in number; including Natarāja, 3,000), who were very different from what they are today—every thing except the sun

and the moon seems to have degenerated in our country—were very learned in Sanskrit and Tamil, and pious and as remarkable for their holiness as they are now for their tufted hair in front.

They saw Nanda and his associates who, though of higher caste, would not go into the town regarding themselves as lower than Nanda the *pariah* in caste. The *Dikshitar*s observed Nanda closely, and saw the light that marked him out as one of the chosen. They heard with delight, though from a distance, his holy songs.

Nanda resumed:

He ruined me, my maids, will he,
My maids, now give me up alone?
The god of love with fiery eye
He burnt, seeth He not my moan?
I love to see Him once, my maids,
From my love-stricken sight he hides.
Once, once, to see his raised foot,
My evils all will fly from sight,
The foot that stretched down
Yamā's height
Our family God to be will suit.

All:

Rich Kalpa's shade, that shade's
own sweet,
Well watered field, its harvest meet.
Beauty's form, the life within.
The dancer that doth ever shine,
The dancer that doth ever shine.
Full beamed moon, that beam's nectar,
The light of space, ether within,
The loving Lord, His joy is mine.
The dancer that doth ever shine,
The dancer that doth ever shine.
Life's light, that life's effulgent might,
The saving ray, that ray's firm light,
The lordly grace that rains like rain.
The dancer that doth ever shine,
The dancer that doth ever shine.
The highest path, its harvest sweet,
The blissful self, its portion meet.

The highest height, peace not yet mine.
The dancer that doth ever shine,
The dancer that doth ever shine.

They proceeded and Nanda grew more enthusiastic as he approached the shrine. The beaming cheerfulness in his face increased in splendour. By this time, the rich autumnal *Divādasi* (12th Lunar day) moon, the Pride of India, of the calm skies, rising like a white lotus springing in the blue of the heavens, spread forth its love-laden music-like ambrosial rays above and below, and Nanda, the love-stricken Nanda, looking up sang:

Oh! radiant, joyous, silvery moon,
myself
To know, tell me a path, tell me a path.
Oh! silvery moon, the lover's friend,
that hath
A seat in my Lord's hair, that place
for Self,
That Sea of Love to have I wish,
say how.

All:
Natarāja, etc. etc.

Nanda:
Thy nightless, dayless life, O silvery
moon
For ever to have, I die, O silvery moon.
O radiant Silvery moon, I pine to be
Myself, the way is hard to see for me.
Tell me, O silvery moon, if my sweet
Lord
Will be with me alone, Oh! hard!
how hard!
Oh! hard it is, thou moon, to be
with Him,
Much too proud is He, much too proud
is He.

All:
Natarāja, etc. etc.

Nanda:
To be His own self! Oh! silvery moon,
And He, be I! Tell how, I fail, I swoon.
A five-headed serpent,⁵ thou silvery
moon,
He plays with ever, I know not how,
I own
Oh! silvery planet—He alone, the One,
In space He dances all alas! alone.
Tell me, O silvery moon, O silvery
moon,
Tell me the way, the way, I swoon,
I swoon.
This world and all do form His dance
they say.
Shed forth, O moon, one ray, one
single ray
Of thine and gladden me and gladden
me.
His joyous dance is all above, above,
My sorry dance is all below, below.

As Nanda proceeded, the love within him matured and attained to the power of the first class, or, as it is called in Sanskrit, classical love as was the case with the shepherdesses of Vraja. (*Nārada-Sūtra*, 21.)

'One Gopi (shepherdess), as she sallied forth, beheld some of the seniors (of the family) and dared not venture, contenting herself with meditating on Krishna with closed eyes and entire devotion, by which immediately all acts of merit were effaced by rapture, and all sin was expiated by regret at not beholding Him; and others again reflecting upon the cause of the world in the form of the supreme Brahman, obtained by their sighing, final emancipation.' (*Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*.)

It was with the same high love to which Thāyumānavar referred in untranslatable language:

5. The soul with five senses, which has life through Īśvara.

Sankara, Sankara, Sambho,
 Siva, Sankara, Sankara, Sambho.
 He that is first and last,
 My bliss, my love, my light,
 The speechless light how vast.
 He spoke a word, my maid,
 Unspeakable, Unspeakable.⁶
 Sankara, Sankara, Sambho
 Siva Sankara, Sankara', Sambho.

Nanda sang again:

Dance, O Dance, O my fairest
 daughters all,
 Till ye find out the Dancer in the hall.
 O sing and dance and sing, O dance
 and sing
 By turns in circles proud, praising the
 King,
 Praising the King, the passionless and
 pure.
 Who yet Sivakāmi fair does e'er allure.

All:

And lovers sweet and lovers sweet,
 O sing

And dance until ye find the Dancing
 King.
 O Sing and dance and sing, O dance
 and sing.

Nanda:

The Lord of dance and love, of dance
 and love
 The most powerful Lord, Vasishtha's
 COW
 To loving hearts, the first great lover,
 The Lord of boundless power, of
 boundless power.
 The king that dances in the hall, the
 poor
 Man's treasure, the light all pure, the
 light all pure.
 Find out, my daughters all, find out the
 King.

All:

O sing and dance and sing, O dance
 and sing
 And dance until ye find the Dancing
 King.

6. The original is difficult to translate. *Unspeakable* implies the words between lovers, not fit to be revealed to the public, and it also implies the words of the guru, rare to get and all too sacred for public ears.

Thus did Nanda dance in ecstasy with
 his companions for three days and nights.

(to be continued)

One Sunday morning, a clergyman apologized to his congregation for the bandage on his face. 'I was thinking about my sermon while shaving,' he explained, 'and cut my face.'

Afterwards, in the collection plate, he found a note: 'Next time, why not think about your face and cut the sermon.'

—N.F.F.

The Spiritual Life of God

P. SCHNEIDRE

The author, whose poems based on those by Swami Vivekananda have appeared in a few PB issues this year, presents below the first of a series of articles on Sri Ramakrishna, rather a precis of select portions of Swami Saradananda's Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master. So, in some places in these articles Swami Saradananda's use of the first person has been retained. However, the chapter divisions and the chronology of The Great Master have no exact correspondence with this study. On the whole, we are sure our readers will benefit from this work, even though they are already fairly well acquainted with the various aspects of Sri Ramakrishna's advent and message.

Schneidre, who resides at Hollywood, Southern California, is a devoted follower of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda-Vedanta Movement. We are thankful to him for this contribution—which, besides being a kind of meditation on Sri Ramakrishna, retells in current idiom what we consider the greatest spiritual saga in history.

There is one subject on which the religious histories of the world are strangely silent: the spiritual life of God. We have almost no information on the transformative disciplines practised by the incarnations—Buddha and Chaitanya being the only exceptions. Where can we turn for a glimpse of the maddening excitement of a great soul on the verge of realizing the truth? What can bring alive in our imagination the sudden flashes of awe and devotion, the alternating periods of hope and despair—all the emotional hurricanes by which the constitutions of the great ones must have been shaken?

A sense of cause and effect, of tendencies fulfilled or overcome—the sort of thing one expects from any good biography—is missing from most religious books. What effect did the early education of the world teachers have on their later teachings? What part did their childhood hopes and dreams play in the reality of their mature lives? By what alchemy did Gopal, playmate of the

gopis of Vrindavan, become Sri Krishna, Lord of Dwaraka and Resuscitator of Religion? We can only guess. Only a few facts survive from the life of Jesus prior to his thirtieth year, and of Shankara's life we know more about his triumphant preaching tours—very little about before or after.

Why should this be so? Could it be that certain facts have been silently left off the record through the misguided devotion of worshippers? Were they reluctant to attribute human imperfection to divine beings—and did they choose, rather, to conceal their masters' flaws from less worthy eyes? Perhaps these devotees, taking on a godlike role themselves, thought they were better serving mankind by posthumously censoring the great ones—showing only the full flowering of their masters' perfection, rather than documenting whatever efforts they may have made to achieve it.

Devotees who prefer to see their great master as eternally perfect refuse to consider

that the very process of taking a human form might have made him vulnerable to human weakness; somehow, they can't reconcile this with divinity. In order to keep their own faith from being undermined, they will allow absolutely no suggestion of lack of insight or power in any portrayal of their beloved master's character. Intent on seeing ultimate reality contained in a human form, they attempt to superimpose the experience and intelligence of an adult onto the sleeping form of a child—and then strain every nerve to see this cooing and hiccupping baby as omniscient and omnipotent, a flawless paragon of universal love and divine tolerance. Such people will then assure us that, in order to elude the understanding of mankind, the incarnations of God only pretended to undergo the effort of spiritual practice—not to mention such ungodly everyday necessities as hunger, sleep, fatigue, disease—and death.

Even in our own time, many devotees of our master, Sri Ramakrishna, have convinced themselves that he faked his final disease.

Such thinking is weakness. We have nothing to say against it, except that it is present in a devotee whose devotion has not matured; in this state, he cannot bear to ask his Lord to give up any of His power. But this state is temporary; as devotion matures and the love of God deepens, all thoughts of His power are felt to be obstacles on the path

of devotion—thoughts to be deliberately avoided.

This is a frequent theme in devotional scriptures. Although Yashoda, Sri Krishna's foster mother, experienced daily the supernatural powers of her child, still, she looked upon him as just a boy and fondled and disciplined him accordingly. Similarly, the Gopis could treat Sri Krishna only as their dear friend—despite knowing that he also happened to be the First Cause of the universe.

Whenever the Master's devotees were eager for visions that would directly reveal the powers of God, he would say sweetly, 'Oh, it's no use having visions. God's power can scare you; then you'll forget to feed Him, dress Him, and call Him "You".' How disappointed his devotees would feel when he talked like this, thinking he was changing the subject to avoid giving them visions!

Sri Ramakrishna was never heard to express the view that the incarnations are only pretending to attain the truth. Rather, he would often be heard saying, 'When the divine sports as a human, he behaves exactly like an ordinary man, experiencing sorrow and well-being and attaining perfection through his personal effort and austerity.' If it were any other way, it seems to us, the very purpose of the incarnation of divinity would be defeated. □

It's never the desire for life's necessities that brings men down, but the desire for things he doesn't really need. A people has never been corrupted by having wheat, fruit, cleaner air, clearer water, more perfect art...but by having gold, treasures, slaves, power, unearned fame and unjust superiority.

—Joubert

Ramakrishna Embraced Them

N. GOPINATH

The author, from Karnataka, who has contributed interesting devotional pieces in the past also for the PB, reminds us of three exceptional incidents in Sri Ramakrishna's life.

It is surprising to note that Sri Ramakrishna—whom the world is gradually accepting as an Incarnation of God in this age—embraced (as far as the limited knowledge of this writer is concerned) *three* persons physically!!! The reader, if not aware of the instances, may wonder who those blessed ones were. They were (1) M. (or Mahendra Nath Gupta, recorder of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*), (2) A Muslim Fakir, and (3) Girish Chandra Ghosh.

Apart from touching fortunate persons, the Master *did* write a sacred mantra on the tongue of some, place his right foot in ecstasy on the body of some others, slightly move his right hand up and down over the chest of some more, etc., to grace them. But embracing others are rare instances and hence worth recollecting:

1. Account of M.:

'Many a time the Master told us, "I am Lord Jagannath of Puri." He sent me to Puri a few times and advised me about what to do in a holy place. Once he said, "Embrace Lord Jagannath." I was in a dilemma, because pilgrims are not supposed to embrace the Lord on the altar. But when I was inside the temple the Master inspired me with an idea. I had some coins and other money; these I intentionally dropped on the floor of the dark sanctuary of the temple. The priests rushed to pick up that money, and in the meantime I jumped on to the altar and embraced Lord Jagannath. Someone saw me and shouted, but I immediately got down and began to circumambulate the

Lord. In the dark nobody could recognize me.

'It was the Master who asked me to embrace Lord Jagannath and gave me the idea how to do it, and then he made it easy for me by arousing greed in the minds of the priests. Now I wonder how I did that daring deed! The Master never went to Puri. He said, "My body will not last if I visit Puri." When I returned from Puri, the Master *embraced* me and said, "Now I have satisfied my desire to embrace Jagannath."¹

2. Muslim Fakir:

Following is the account by Manmatha Nath Ghosh, a householder devotee of Sri Ramakrishna:

'One evening as I was passing by the Geratala Mosque, I heard the loud prayer of a Muslim Fakir (holy man): "O my Beloved, Please come! Please come! O my Beloved!" He was repeating this prayer with love and longing as tears rolled down his cheeks.

'Suddenly I saw Sri Ramakrishna climb down from a hired carriage and rush up to the Fakir. The two *embraced* each other. This incident happened when the Master was returning from Kalighat after visiting the Divine Mother there. What a wonderful sight it was! Two other people were in the

(Continued on page 592)

1. Swami Chetanananda, *Ramakrishna As We Saw Him* (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1993), pp. 307–08. (Italics by the present writer.)

Reminiscences of the Holy Mother

by
SHIVA RANI SEN
as told to
SUSHAMA SEN

The following is a translation of the reminiscences of the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi, published in the December 1992 issue of Udbodhan. Smt. Shiva Rani Sen, who lived at Howrah, West Bengal, and passed away there in June 1994, narrated her memoirs to her daughter-in-law, Smt. Sushama Sen. Though she remembered very little of all she saw and heard, the little that she was able to recollect is of great interest.

I am now eighty-seven. I saw the Holy Mother for the first time when I was seven or eight years old, that is, about seventy-nine to eighty years ago. As my uncle lived in Baghbazar, my grandmother used to go to the 'Mother's House' at Baghbazar to visit the Holy Mother. Whenever I went to my uncle's house, I would accompany her there. Later on, as long as grandmother lived, I often had the blessed opportunity of having the *darshan* of the Holy Mother.

Being very young, I could not understand the greatness of the Mother. Still seeing her and listening to her words would fill my heart with joy. Over and above that, whenever I visited her, there would be the additional boon of handfuls of consecrated food (*prasād*) from the Holy Mother's hands. As long as she was in good health, the Mother gave us *prasād* from her own hands. Sweets, fruit and what not! My tiny hands could not hold all that. Whether or not I understood the Mother's glory, I at least relished the sweetness of the *prasād*! This desire for *prasād* pulled me to the Mother in those days.

The Holy Mother used to speak to my grandmother and others. I heard them but could not understand anything. However, of whatever the Mother told me, some words remain fresh in my mind, and her bright, smiling face that was full of compas-

sion stands before my eyes even today.

Mother's words were very sweet. Those nectarine words ring in my ears even now. Once the Mother told me: 'My child, never sit idle: do something or the other. One must engage oneself in some work; otherwise nasty thoughts come and crowd the idle mind.' Mother told an old lady one day: 'If you see someone fallen on the path, you must help the person up. One must not leave a person who has fallen and simply walk away.' I was young then and hence could not fathom the meaning of the Mother's words. I would just pick up whatever valuable had fallen on the road and keep it.

But, as I grew up, I grasped the meaning of what the Mother had said. I read her life and realized that she did not ask one to pick up what was lying on the roadside. Be it our neighbours, or a known or unknown person—if anyone falls down on the path to progress, we must try to pick them up by the hand and take them along the right path—this was what the Mother had meant. This is because, is not everyone's path the same—the road to God? How could it be that I alone must walk along that path? I must try as much as is in my capacity to pick up others also, even those who are off the track, and help them reach the goal. This was the ideal the Mother herself set up through her own life. She has lifted up and given

shelter to innumerable men and women in misery, even those that were called sinners. Blessed are those that were picked up from the roadside by the Mother!

The Mother was extremely shy by nature. If a boy was fifteen or sixteen years old, he would be a 'gentleman' for her. She would completely cover herself with a cloth in his presence. She would say, 'Modesty is the ornament of womanhood. It is not befitting for women to be without a veil.' I heard the Mother telling a young housewife one day: 'When you go out, cover yourself well with a cloth or *chaddar*. You will then feel that somebody is there with you.'

One day some of us, including my grandmother and a few members of my uncle's family, went to the Mother's House. We were to have prasād at noon there. We ate with the Holy Mother. I noticed that the Mother would eat with the women devotees in one room. Men would eat in a separate room. We all ate to our fill and washed our hands. I then saw the Holy Mother hurriedly telling someone to give us some prasād in a vessel to be taken with us.

Since the person she told delayed a little, the Mother herself got up and was about to find out what had happened. Yogin Ma said: 'Mother, why should you get up? She must be washing the utensil and hence the delay.' Then, smiling, Yogin Ma added: 'Has your father's house provided you with a mountain of utensils so that you may send prasād to every home in containers?' The Mother also smiled and said: 'Ah! These children would be glad to have some prasād!' Yogin Ma laughed and said: 'Don't we know your nature! If possible you would have made the whole world sit and eat here...All right, I shall look into the matter; please sit down.' Saying this, Yogin Ma left and brought prasād for us to carry home. There was a smile of satisfaction on the Mother's face. When I think of all this now, I feel that as the Divine Mother she protects the universe, and as the Mother Annapurna

she feeds everyone of us. The Mother was so concerned about one and all.

The Mother was 'One whose self was merged in Sri Ramakrishna,' (*Ramakrishna-gata-prāṇā*). In her every action, word and thought, Sri Ramakrishna would invariably be there. The Mother would tell my grandmother: 'At every step in life, remember Sri Ramakrishna. Then, no difficulty will seem to be a difficulty to you. Whoever does not have difficulties in life? All those will remain. If anyone repeats His name and surrenders to Him, He will grant strength; misery and suffering will not leave their impress upon that person then.'

In her house at Baghbazar, the Holy Mother would sit, busy with her world-family, as it were. In the midst of the visits of large numbers of devotees, work went on smoothly. In the evenings, either Yogin Ma or Golap Ma would dress the Mother's hair. The Mother had a mass of black hair on her head that looked so beautiful. As the Mother was deep, her hair too was deep and thick. It looked as if the whole sky was blackened with dark clouds covering it. However, towards the end of her life her hair became thinner.

The feet of the Holy Mother were very beautiful. The soles had the colour of red lotuses. Her face also was beautiful. Her eyes, nose, and so on were remarkable. Her eyes and her face were as if drenched in compassion and love.

Once something fell into Radhu's¹ eyes. She came running, lay down placing her head in the Mother's lap and said: 'Something has fallen into my eyes. My eyes are burning. Please run your hand over my eyes, then they will be all right.' Smiling, the Mother pulled Radhu's head closer to her and slowly caressed her closed eyes with her hand. Radhu then said: 'My eyes are all right

(Continued on page 577)

1. Radharani, the niece of the Mother.

One

LALIT K. MUKERJEE

This poem was composed by Sri Mukerjee at the end of his stay here at Mayavati for a few days this year: the response of a soul stirred deeply by the spiritually uplifting magnificence of this place Swami Vivekananda loved so much.

The author, a close friend of the Ramakrishna Order for the past several decades, resides at Calcutta.

Beyond me, beyond the Himalayan heights,
The silence and whistle of stray birds,
Shaking of tall pine trees,
And occasional sounds of a barking deer or two,
The noise of foot-steps on fallen tree leaves
Of stray village passerby,
The rising sun on top of snow-clad peak,
The glorious setting sun on that
Distant mountain range and the
Breath-taking silence all over.
Oh! it engulfs me...

I begin to lose my identity.
Dare to ponder! Who are you,
Where are you... Who is the Creator
What is this creation!
Are you without all these are within—
I beg to the utter absolute silence
For an answer!

Are you beyond me—beyond elsewhere
Within or without, all these Himalayan heights
Abundance of Nature, whistle of stray birds,
Shaking of tall pine trees and
All other as much as I see and even
Cannot perceive! Then all on a sudden
I feel that you stand forever
With your many-faceted Majestic Presence
In each of all these and over again
With all of them, all in One!
You MY Atman! I! Advaita!! □

Science and Vedanta

S. K. KAR

In this perceptive article the author, who is a Calcutta-based accountant with a flair for science, explains that the spiritual oneness of humankind—nay, the oneness of the whole universe ‘...is the great principle which is unconsciously forming the basis of all the latest political and social aspirations...’ of people everywhere. ‘What is required is to make the world conscious about why we wish to proceed towards unity and greater unity.’

The modern age is an age of scientific advancement. With the scope of scientific explanation extending, religious mystery is diminishing. The scientific method demands induction from facts, and not deduction from dogmas. This method becomes corrupt when we start with conclusions to play later on with the facts. Instead, the pure scientific method is in favour of facing the facts and deriving conclusions from them.

While striving to comprehend the law that sustains the universe, a scientist utilizes his intellect and reasoning. The great scientific discoveries have been made possible, however, not merely through the laborious process of the intellect, but also by the inventive genius of creative thinkers. And it is this that has made modern science so wonderful. A scientist with intense and concentrated interest in a problem suddenly and spontaneously gets a ‘warmth of feeling’ about a new truth not previously known. New truths are mainly due to the sudden discoveries of new meanings in facts that are already well known.

Matter is the mother of the universe. According to the old atomic theory, all matter is reducible to atoms or tiny particles. These were taken as indivisible and immutable. The changes visible in material things were stated to be due to changes in the arrangement of these irreducible atoms into their forms as molecules. As the atoms were

regarded as unchanging in character, it was thought that visible chemical and physical changes were not due to changes in the atoms’ internal constitution. While this theory was an attempt towards the modern conclusions regarding oneness and solidarity of the universe, it was only a stepping stone and not a stopping place.

This early theory could not account for the difference between one element and another. However, modern physics has transformed the old concept of matter. It was J.J. Thomson who resolved atoms into more minute corpuscles, which in turn were reduced to electrical units. With the discovery that the atom is a structure consisting of protons, neutrons and electrons (except in the case of the atom of hydrogen where there is no neutron) of varying degrees of complexity, all physical matter is now known to be an ‘open structure’ with large empty space inside, with scattered electrical charge, and with chemical properties of an element depending on the number of electrons circling round (orbiting) the protons and neutrons. The idea of a hard indivisible atom has thus been displaced by the idea of an electrical influence.

Matter is no longer conceived of as inert, but as active as life. If there is any difference between matter and life, it is not one of passivity or activity, but of activity of two different kinds. It is now clear that the inertia

of matter discovered by Newton and mentioned in his First Law of Mechanical Motion is but the result of the atom's internal activity. Radioactivity in matter, and organic descent in life are analogous. The impassable gulf between matter and life has thus disappeared. Atom, molecule, colloid, protoplasm, cell, and even human brain are now

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being treated as continuous phases of a single process. Atoms having combined into a molecule acquire a new status. The new qualities they acquire are by virtue of the whole to which they now belong and are quite different from their nature before their combination.

All the sciences are now studies of 'organism' or complex wholes. While biology is the study of larger organisms, physics is the study of smaller organisms. Judged in this context the world is nothing but an automatic machine. It is going on in a blind haphazard way—making life, consciousness, and even values its mere by-products. The materials of a body are provided by a few specific chemical elements and their compounds. Even the necessary stimuli required for directing life in its career and enabling it to see, hear, smell and taste other things are taken as having been generated from specific vibrations, such as light and sound waves.

Despite the fact that all physical objects, including the human brain, are of the same

basic stuff, their sensible qualities are different, and this has not yet been accounted for by the law of pure mechanics. Protoplasm, the basis of life in plants and animals, is regarded as a complex chemical compound. The process of assimilation, respiration, reproduction, growth and development in plants and animals is, however, different from physico-chemical reactions. What is peculiar to a living organ is that it is a whole, capable of doing things that no atomic system could ever do. An atom is capable neither of mending nor of reproducing itself. It cannot therefore be held that living organisms are mere complexes of a physico-chemical process. The power of variation and the persistent tendency to perfect itself are deep within life itself. Thus matter reduced to electrical energy can be equated neither with life nor with the mind, let alone the Soul. That there is something beyond matter was admitted by no less a person than Einstein himself. He said:

Certain it is that a conviction akin to religious feeling, of rationality or intelligibility of the world, lies behind all scientific work of a high order. This firm belief bound up with a deep feeling in a superior mind that reveals itself in the world of experience represents my conception of God.

Despite the limitations of the scientific explanations, the displacement of hard indivisible matter by electric influence is relevant from the philosophical point of view also. It has gone a long way towards harmonization of science and metaphysics.

The main theme of Vedanta philosophy is the search after unity. According to this philosophy the whole of the universe can be resolved into one material called Ākāśa. Along with Ākāśa there is one universal power which is manifesting as force or attraction and even as thought. That universal

energy is called Prāṇa. The universe is being moved by this Prāṇa acting on Ākāśa. Matter, the mother of the universe, is now being seen by modern scientists as reduced to electrical forces acting on space.

Up to this point the conclusions of science are the very conclusions which the Vedānta philosophy had reached ages ago, and which did not stop there but went further to explain what modern science has not yet been able to explain. It has explained that Ākāśa is motionless and unmanifested at the beginning of the cycle. Then Prāṇa begins to act more and more, with the result that plants, animals, humans, stars and moon are created. This evolution ceases after an incalculable length of time and involution begins, with the result that everything is again resolved into the original Ākāśa and Prāṇa. Even this is not the end however; both of them get resolved into the even more rarified primordial Substance, Mahat (cosmic Mind) from which the Ākāśa and Prāṇa had evolved earlier in the cycle.

The belief about mind, Soul and God has been dealt with in the universally accepted Sāṅkhya psychology.¹ It has been explained that, in visual perception (other modes of perception being analogous) the eyes are the instruments of vision. Behind these instruments, which transform visual stimuli into electrical impulses in the nerves, there is the optic nerve, which with its finer counterpart, its reporting centre in the brain has a part to play in making it possible for the 'eyes to see'. More, it is still required that the mind be attached to the brain-centre. The potential sensation is then required to be acted on by the determinative-reactive state

of mind, the intellect. The reaction coming from intellect flashes the message from the external world in association with the 'I'-consciousness or egoism; this is the will.

The process is not yet complete. It is still required that all the reactions of the intellect and will must be gathered and projected on something that is changeless in relation to the body and mind. (Just as in the case of film in a camera, the cameraman guides rays of

Despite the fact that all physical objects, including the human brain, are of the same basic stuff, their sensible qualities are different, and this has not yet been accounted for by the law of pure mechanics.

light through the lens to fall upon a sheet of film where they are grouped together. The sheet of film is permanent in relation to the moving rays of light.) In relation to body and mind, the 'permanent one' is the Soul or Puruṣa (Atman).

Thus we have external bodies; behind the external bodies are the instruments of perception; behind them are the internal organs or brain-centres, the mind, the intellect, and ego or 'I'-consciousness; and behind all is the Soul.

Ultimately Vedānta goes on to explain that the ego, the mind and the body are not three separate existences, but it is the unitary Divine Power, Soul, which is manifest as all of them, and remains Itself beyond all of them. It is important to note that, ultimately it is only the Divine Spirit which can be said to exist as the permanent reality. The relative world appears and disappears, like the misperception of a piece of rope as snake. To anybody seeing the rope as snake, the rope has vanished. And with the delusion ceasing, the rope is seen as rope and the snake

1. Sāṅkhya is one of the six systems of Indian philosophy founded by Kapila. Its cosmology/psychology is for the most part accepted by all the schools, including the Buddhist ones.—Ed.

vanishes.

Advaita Vedanta holds that, finally there is no place for innumerable individual Souls and material things. The differentiation of matter and phenomena by our five senses and mind is, as it were, for the time being deluding us regarding the real indivisible unitary divine nature of all existence. The same Divine essence is present in all, from the lowliest worm to the highest human being.

In this is found the rational basis of ethics and morality. Hatred and jealousy, miseries and struggles, and all other evils are the outcome of the mistakenly 'individu-

ated' self. When this is fully realized, we become witness to the divine Self in all, and are ready even to give our life for a little insect. We attain Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, the goal of Advaita Vedanta.

This is the one life-giving idea that is essentially required by the world today. This is the great principle unconsciously forming the basis of all political and social aspirations even. What is necessary is to make the world conscious about why it has been striving to proceed towards unity and greater unity. This the life-giving non-dualistic philosophy of Vedanta alone is capable of achieving convincingly. □

Reminiscences of the Holy Mother

(Continued from page 572)

now! Nothing is in my eyes anymore!'

Mother could not bear to have either young or elderly widows fast totally, without even sipping water, on *ekādaśī* days or on any other occasion.² Mother also did not like that young widows should cut their hair

2. It is customary in traditional families in India to fast on the eleventh day (*ekādaśī*) of the lunar month. Earlier widows either shaved off their hair or cut it short.

short.

How much could I understand of the infinite *līlā* of the Mother? To tell you what little I have understood is also difficult for an ordinary woman like me. I can remember only very little of all that I heard and saw during my young days. Still, I would like very much to place before the readers the few moments of my seeing and listening to the Holy Mother, and hence these few words. □

It isn't the incompetent who destroy an organization. The incompetent never get into a position to destroy it. It is those who have achieved something and want to rest on their achievements who are forever clogging things up. To keep an industry pure, you've got to keep it in perpetual ferment.

—Charles Wood in *Forbes*

Vedanta Values in Everyday Life

ERIC MURPHY

The author is, by his own definition towards the end of the article, a 'loyal follower' of Vedanta for the past several years. An American/Australian citizen, now mostly living in NSW, Australia, he shares with you in the following article his views on the Vedantic way of life and how he has been trying to work them out since his first contact with the Ramakrishna Movement in the U.S.A.

Unity, Oneness, 'The Peace That Passeth All Understanding', Loving Our Neighbour As Ourselves: these are spiritual values that can be achieved and practised in daily life. How is this possible in today's world of diversity, tension and competition? Can Vedanta values help us develop the fine balance needed to resolve these contradictions? The answer is yes. This process, our spiritual evolution, slowly transforms us, deepening and broadening our understanding of all that is. Finally our doubts are dispelled and answers to life's trickiest questions surface. Unity and peace become established. But first many tough struggles face the Vedantist.

Most obvious of these is dealing with the presence of evil in our world. What a vast difference one must see in another to want to uproot their very existence, to torture and kill the family and burn their home in a cultural genocide! How can such events occur in a world of underlying unity and oneness? How does the Vedantist absorb the screams of the violated, the horrible mutilation of the innocents? These terrible actions seem to deny any possibility of divinity in humans.

Some resolution of this problem can be arrived at through introspection. One who meditates will sometimes, or even often, experience impulses from deep within that can only be called demonic. As the mind and heart are purified, there is a certain boiling away of the impure in us. Many of these

lower urges die a slow and painful death, as it were. Our spiritual struggles can become a prolonged war against the destructive tendencies in the mind. The fight seems more ferocious at times than actual physical combat. A Vedantist will have to admit that the seeds of all the evil without originate in the mind and the heart of humans. Shocking as this discovery may be, it affords us a kind of oneness and unity with the madcaps of this planet, who are simply going with their bad inclinations instead of resisting them.

It is easier for the Vedantist to feel oneness with the victims of evil. After all, it could be us, given another set of circumstances. What happens to someone else today could happen to us tomorrow. So we suffer with them if we have a heart. The same insane urges that cause misery to another can destroy our spiritual life from within. Then we too become victims. The Vedantist will suffer with the afflicted, but at the same time fight the battle within by using weapons of discrimination and prayer. In this way, internal restraint helps us to balance out the force of evil in the world.

Treating one's neighbour as ourselves does not mean just pacifying the neighbour. Internal disciplines raise the moral attitude naturally. Taken in this context, dealing with our neighbour as our very own self becomes an affirmation of the spiritual struggle. To the extent that we are committed to the battle within, others will con-

sciously or instinctively respond to our outer poise and dignity. The practice of unity may translate into fearlessness in everyday life; facing the brute in a state of calmness. It does not mean suddenly adopting the level of frustration and anger that we meet. If we restrain our own reaction, the other person or persons may cool down a little. Treating one's neighbour as one's self can mean addressing the higher self in the other, the Atman that Vedanta speaks of.

To summarize the personal resolution of the problem of evil in the world: the Vedantist recognizes the existence of de-

God is the end and goal of all spiritual practice.

After long years of meditation, the aspirant slowly develops a deeper sense of the 'thou' within; a holy presence that is neither the mind nor the intellect nor the emotions. One blessed day or night, the truth suddenly dawns in the aspirant's heart, 'Thou Art That!' Thou, whom I have been seeking for so long. Thou, whose grace I can feel and by whose very will my limbs move. 'Thou Art That!' This is a revelation so benign, so profound, so soothing and inspiring as to belie attempts to describe it. The map can now be

Our spiritual struggles can become a prolonged war against the destructive tendencies in the mind. The fight seems more ferocious at times than actual physical combat. A Vedantist will have to admit that the seeds of all the evil without originate in the mind and the heart of humans. Shocking as this discovery may be, it affords us a kind of oneness and unity with the madcaps of this planet, who are simply going with their bad inclinations instead of resisting them.

monic passions within and understands, given adverse circumstances, these very passions could wreak havoc without. One sees that wrongdoers are victims of their own or other's passions run rampant. A kind of unity is achieved with those at the receiving end of the violence when we realize that this could be us at any time and that in the larger sense of humanity and Vedanta, it is us! A great soul like Swami Vivekananda could identify with and encompass everything within his own consciousness. If the everyday Vedantist can digest these realization of oneness, he or she will cease to judge or feel sorry for others in the context of differentiation. All that is and all moods are incorporated into one's very own soul and our world becomes *the world!*

'Tat tvam asi!' Thou Art That! This is the precious Vedic dictum identifying the soul with the oversoul, the spirit with the infinite, Atman and Brahman. To use Christ's words, 'I and my Father are One.' For the Vedantist, knowing the innermost Self to be one with

thrown away. With this realization comes complete transcendence of problems like evil in the world, or right and wrong. God is! The story ends.

A person whose identity is totally spiritual has little to fear and is less vulnerable to oppression. There is a tale from the Second World War about some inmates in a prison camp. Someone had broken the rules and the German guards decided to throw every tenth man into a pit to starve. The prisoners lined up. A Jewish man stood next to a Catholic priest. The punishment fell on the Jew. The Jew had a wife and children and he earnestly requested the priest to exchange places with him. The priest readily agreed and the Germans just shrugged and threw the priest into the pit with the others.

It is a well-known fact that starvation is one of the slowest and most painful ways to perish. The priest made a courageous sacrifice. Yet, in the pit he seemed to be absorbed in prayer and could be heard singing hymns while others slowly died around him. At

night the guards were haunted by the sounds of the priest's devotions. At last only this Christian was left alive. The sight of his emaciated body, lost in prayer, was pathetic. He should have died long before, but he remained steady in his worship of the Lord. The Jewish man was astonished at this example of faith. He survived to tell the story and be reunited with his family, but the guards finished off the priest with a bullet.

This amazing priest must have been a person of deep spiritual realization. His faith was total. How different this incident is from the stories of people who abandon their faith in the last instant. During the holocaust even Rabbis were heard to cry 'There is no God!' upon grasping their horrific fate, only minutes away. These graphic, even troubling, examples illustrate the gap between mere belief in a patriarchal God and the faith of a realized soul merged in a God that is immanent, transcendent and omnipresent. Realization takes one out of the phenomenal world with its pairs of opposites. There none exists, only the One exists. This consciousness is beyond existence and non-existence. Words can only hint at the reality. It is an absolute experience of 'Thou Art That!'

When this Thou has been found deep within, it can be seen in others and in all phenomenon. Sri Ramakrishna experienced ecstasy as a young boy at the sight of some beautiful white cranes against a black cloud. For the Vedantist, the creation itself and all life begin to appear saturated with the divine. Ann Pullen, an American Vedantist since 1952, comments on this notion:

In thinking about it, I realize that Vedanta values colour everything. It is almost as though life before Vedanta was an old silent, black and white movie. Vedanta adds colour, sound, fragrance, meaning: *value*.

As the time passes, the Vedantist tends to become a better listener. In the words of others the reality may be speaking. Incidents

of life seem to be the divine will expressing itself. The creative and destructive powers of nature may be seen as the dance of Kali. A certain poetry hangs over everything. The senses seem to be more in balance, less distracting. One begins to feel all is as it should be and peace abides in the heart.

Nature herself, when refined by physicists and mathematicians to her elemental principles, closely resembles Vedanta cosmology. Einstein made the startling statement that neither the past or present or future had any solid basis in reality. Recently the Australian physicist, Paul Davies, gave a series of interviews to the noted atheist and journalist, Phillip Adams. Davies gave the illustration of what he called 'the twin phenomenon'. Given certain high speeds of space travel, one twin could speed through the universe for one year and, upon returning to earth, find that the other twin had aged ten years. Travel to the future is theoretically possible. How unreal then is even our cherished notion of measured time. Great souls like Swami Vivekananda seemed to see the future. Perhaps their internal relationship with the timeless allowed them to do so. What an exciting place this universe is. How much more wonderful must be the power behind it!

Vedanta values give one a certain special confidence in dealing with the many demands of our regimented modern life. Looking beneath the surface of, say a government bureaucracy, allows one to better adjust to the demands and protocol of the given agency. Having patience sometimes results in catching a great bureaucratic fish, so to speak. When one locates the human element within, someone on the phone or in an office may really come to the rescue. This can be fun, a type of Vedanta treasure hunt, to find the warm heart buried in a big organization. Many good hearts are there and ready to assist, if one just shows them the respect and courtesy that we hope for ourselves. Well, try it sometime!

Is Vedanta philosophy too sublime, too positive and idealistic in the age of moral, cultural and environmental decline? Can a flower exist in all this rubble? It may be possible to compare the modern Vedantists with the early Gnostic Christians of the first and second centuries after Christ's death. While the Roman Empire slowly began to decline, these Gnostic Christians were having profound spiritual experiences. The Gnostic tradition was very democratic. For the most part, women were afforded an equal place with men in all ceremonies. Knowledge and the resulting spiritual authority came from one's own mystical insight and was open to all. The Gnostic Christians could not accept the final authority of a patriarchal creator God or His divine emissaries, the bishops.

It was the view of many Gnostics that the bishops and their church hierarchy seemed to be almost hijacking religion and bottling it up for sale, as it were. For example, the Gnostic Christians saw the virginity of Mary, mother of Jesus, in largely symbolic terms with a wide scope for individual interpretation. Some Gnostics even derided the bishops for claiming that Mary was technically a virgin. When what became known as the Catholic Church began insisting on a fixed format for ceremonies like the Eucharist, many Gnostic Christians kept to their own approach. Women participated equally and the role of leader or priest passed alternatively amongst the congregation. By the later part of the second century, bishops like the voluminous Irenaeus were urging other Catholic prelates to expel the Gnostic Christians from the Church as dangerous heretics.

Gnostic cosmology contained a vision that went beyond orthodox Christian monotheism. The Gnostics called the Judeo-Christian patriarchal God 'the demiurge'. This was a kind of caretaker divinity who shaped and managed the creation. To the Gnostics, the bishops were the servants of the demiurge. Behind the demiurge was a higher,

greater power at work which manifested as both feminine and masculine principles. This higher reality transcended any earthly authority. This and other Gnostic concepts begin to sound a lot like Advaita Vedanta philosophy.

Gnostic in Greek means knowledge or insight. Gnosis involves an intuitive process of knowing oneself. To know oneself at the deepest level is simultaneously to know God. This is the secret of gnosis as espoused by one of its teachers, Monoimus.

Abandon the search for God and the creation and other matters of a similar sort. Look for him by taking yourself as the starting point. Learn who it is within you who makes everything his own and says, 'My God, my mind, my thought, my soul, my body'. Learn the sources of sorrow, joy, love, hate;...If you carefully investigate these matters you will find him in yourself.¹

How these words echo our Vedanta! The modern Vedantists are not hounded by rigid bishops serving a patriarchal demiurge, but we are exposed to banks and corporations as well as an overbearing infrastructure of government and taxes. Many of these elements also bore down on the citizens of the late Roman Empire. An edict issued by the Emperor Diocletian towards the end of the third century froze all tax-paying citizens in their given professions and domiciles. The effects of capitalism are doing this to us today. People are locked into their jobs and homes because of the prohibitive cost of shifting. When the Catholic Church took over the administrative role from the dying Roman Empire, the caste system of the early middle ages was born in Europe. It is a very sad result that the Gnostic Christians were eliminated in this process. What could have been the Vedantic aspect of Christianity was extinguished of

1. Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 18.

heresy.

This tragedy also reminds us of the decentralizing effect of spiritual traditions based on the direct mystical experiences of their adherents. Only in the last fifty years have we known of most of the Gnostic Gospels exhumed from their hiding place near Nag Hammadi, Egypt. Like the Upanishads, many are also still missing. We can only give thanks to the unknown Gnostic Christians who buried these spiritual treasures nearly two thousand years ago, on that sad day when persecution forced them to hide their scriptures. Many contemporary Vedantists may lie similarly hidden in society. Vedanta practices nudge one toward silence and solitude. Vedanta will probably never be a big movement in the West because no one is trying to make it so. Swami Prabhavananda, founder of the Vedanta Society of Southern California used to say, 'We are nobodies; become a nobody.'

How can Vedanta values influence our everyday encounters with others? Sometimes a small misunderstanding can produce a disproportionate reaction in ourselves and in others. If both people hold on to their positions, a stalemate results. A helpful device in these circumstances is to force oneself to assume the position of the other for a few minutes, hours, or days, if necessary. This can be a difficult and painful discipline, real *sādhana*. However, by seeing the other side, we move off our own mind set and view ourselves through another's mind. Suddenly we may understand their point in the argument or grasp the nature and level of their anger or frustration. Often we see that we ourselves have become a kind of obstacle to the desires of another. The new perspective tends to relieve our tension and we never return to the mood of our original reaction. This is not a backdown or necessarily a resolution of who is right or wrong. It is *back off*; just seeing the situation for what it is. In short, the incident is defused and often we can see where we were wrong.

Again, to quote Ann Pullen:

God knows we're not always perfect—not by a long shot—but we *always* know when we're wrong, whether or not we admit it to others.

Psychologists say that a healthy mind moves on. It doesn't dwell too long on one thought. To do so can result in obsessive behaviour. On the surface this seems right. The natural flow of the mind should not be impeded. We all feel the relief that comes when we let something go and restore harmony in our relationships. However, on a deeper level, Vedanta asks us to constantly remember our spiritual ideal. Being unattached, feeling the freedom of the soul, these thoughts will uplift our minds. Vedanta values mean not dwelling too much on people, problems or worldly issues while simultaneously clinging tenaciously and enthusiastically to our spiritual practice.

A Vedantist, convinced that the Self within is the Self in all, may want to express this reality in a radical way. If service to others is serving God, then why not go ahead with this worship and see how it works. Assume the attitude of some needy person and then address yourself to helping solve that person's problems once rightly understood. How one might like things in their position gives one the clues of what to do. A joyful result to experience is the freedom and happiness one feels when forgetting oneself for a while. To lose oneself in service, this is the greatest thing and brings the best results. Vedanta values at a grass roots level are very practical and effective.

Vedanta values give one courage to take that next step beyond our natural inclinations. We test our strength and insight in new waters, as it were. Our learning curve speeds up. The lower middle class neighbourhoods of Calcutta are a case in point. There, in what to the casual eye would appear to be nearly impossible living conditions, are intricate social systems where every detail is worked out. Somewhere is a

well that comes on at 4 pm. Somewhere is the bathroom for three or four families. These kids are going to one school, those are coming from another. Pots and pans are being washed to the point of shining. Meals for a large family are being prepared in a minimum space and then everything is neatly packed away. A person one almost

we learn to put into our spiritual practice, the skill, tenacity and endurance of a Calcutta taxi driver? Can the Vedantist match the cheerfulness and sheer good-will of the Kalighat stall-holder sitting day and night on her table, gesturing, talking, smiling and carrying on her business in such a friendly manner? Can we match the austerities of a

Vedanta values are reflected in our vision of daily life. In India and elsewhere an incredible amount of harmony and patience can be witnessed every day. Can we learn to put into our spiritual practice, the skill, tenacity and endurance of a Calcutta taxi driver? Can the Vedantist match the cheerfulness and sheer good-will of the Kalighat stall-holder sitting day and night on her table, gesturing, talking, smiling and carrying on her business in such a friendly manner? Can we match the austerities of a middle-aged Bengali housewife who serves her extended family with devotion as deep as the ocean and as smoothly flowing as the Ganga?

wanted to help turns out to be a real 'babu' with a prosperous shop nearby. This world is functioning extremely well with such minimal resources. To get to know such a neighbourhood is a real blessing. One returns home armed with knowledge of the vast human possibilities if the cooperative will is strong enough. One gains a new perspective on the supposed problems of the affluent nations.

Another reflection of Vedanta values is the quality of loyalty. Vedanta is not a quick fix or a 'feel good' path. Vedanta values are for the long haul. Seeing unity in diversity, knowing truth beyond our own foibles....This requires fidelity to the ideal. A Vedantist may slip and even fall, but loyalty means getting back up and continuing on. Even during down periods, those dark nights of the soul, one must struggle to remain focused and head doggedly towards the goal. Of course, the goal is always right there in us; only we become blind to it for some time.

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middle-aged Bengali housewife who serves her extended family with devotion as deep as the ocean and as smoothly flowing as the Ganga?

Vedanta values means observing these things with respect and admiration while trying to imbibe some of the good qualities that we notice. Instead of chaos in the Calcutta traffic, one sees the great effort to harmonize. Instead of the drudgery of a street stall one sees a noble woman struggling like a heroine, practising sādhanā to feed her family. Instead of a burdened housewife, one sees a model of equipoise. In short, the mind of the Vedantist begins to admire the expressions of the divinity visible all around.

The improvement and elevation of one's vision is a concise way to describe Vedanta values in everyday life. We start from where we are. Slowly and steadily we raise the level of consciousness and build up our character. Eventually one may become a worthy practitioner of the noble Vedanta. The Vedanta values permeate our very being. □

New Light on Vedic India and Ancient Civilizations

N.S. RAJARAM

(Continued from the previous issue)

II

Aryan Invasion:

European Politics, not Indian History

As described in the previous section, the verdict of archaeology is clear and unambiguous: the *Rig-Veda* describes India as it was before the drying up of the Sarasvati, when it was still a flourishing river and a vital source. The Indus civilization, the name given to the vast civilization stretching more than a million square kilometers, was in reality a continuation of the Vedic Aryan. In a statement now famous in the annals of South Asian studies, the archaeological scene was aptly summed up by the American archaeologist Jim Shaffer as follows:

...current archaeological data do not support the existence of an Indo-Aryan or European invasion into South Asia any time in the pre- or protohistoric periods. Instead, it is possible to document archaeologically a series of cultural changes reflecting indigenous cultural developments from prehistoric to historic periods.

These findings support traditional dates for some of the crucial events found in the Indian literature like the 3102 BC date for the Mahabharata War. Some of these are of course quite recent and it would be unrealistic to expect history books to be aware of the latest results. But unfortunately, influential Indian historians and educators continue to resist all revisions and hold on to

this racist creation—the Aryan invasion theory. Although there is now a tendency to treat the Aryan-Dravidian division as a linguistic phenomenon, its roots are decidedly racial as we shall soon see. It would probably be an oversimplification to say: 'Germans invented it, British used it', but not by much. For reasons best known to themselves, Indian educational authorities have continued to propagate this obsolete fiction that degrades and divides the people. It is an idea that receives no support at all from science or Indian records.

First let me take a brief look at what the word Arya means. After Hitler and the Nazi atrocities, most people, especially Europeans are understandably reluctant to be reminded of the word. But that was a European crime; Indians had no part in it. The real Aryans have lived in India for thousands of years without committing anything remotely resembling it. We have already seen that the idea of the Aryans as foreigners who invaded India and destroyed the existing Harappan civilization is a modern European invention that receives no support whatsoever from Indian records or science. The same is true of the notion of the Aryans as a race; it too finds no support in Indian literature or tradition. The word 'Arya' in Sanskrit means *noble*, and never a race. In fact, the authoritative Sanskrit lexicon, the famous *Amarakosha*, gives the following definition:

An Arya is one who hails from a noble family,

is of gentle behaviour and demeanour, good natured and of righteous conduct.

And the great epic, *Ramayana*, praises Rama as an 'Arya who worked for the equality of all and was dear to everyone'. The *Rig-Veda* also uses the word Arya thirty-six times, but never to mean a race. So Indians have no reason to be ashamed of the word Arya. It is a cultural designation of a people who created a great civilization. If the Europeans fight shy the word, it is their problem stemming from their atrocities.

In order to understand the European misuse of the word 'Arya' as a race, and the creation of the Aryan invasion idea, we need to go back to the eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe, especially to Germany. The whole thing stems from the European anti-Semitism. Recent research by scholars such as Poliakov, Shaffer and others has shown that the idea of an invading Aryan race can be traced to the aspirations of the eighteenth and nineteenth century Christians of Europe to give themselves an identity that was free from the taint of Judaism. The Bible as is well known consists of two books: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old testament gives the traditional history of mankind. It is of course a Jewish creation. Without Judaism there would be no Christianity. But until very recently, Christianity has been strongly anti-Semitic without being able to deny its own Jewish origins.

To free themselves from this Jewish heritage, the intellectuals of Christian Europe looked east, to Asia. And there they saw two ancient civilizations—India and China. To them the Indian Aryans were preferable as ancestors to the Chinese. So they became the Aryans. But it was not the whole human race that was given this Aryan ancestry: only a white race that came down from the mountains of Asia and subsequently became Christian and colonized

Europe. No less an intellectual than Voltaire claimed to be 'convinced that everything has come down to us from the bank of the Ganges—astronomy, astrology, metempsychosis, etc.'

A modern student today can scarcely have any idea of the extraordinary influence of race theories in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. Many educated people really believed that human qualities could be predicted on the basis of measure-

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ments of physical characteristics such as eye colour, length of the nose, etc. It went beyond prejudice, it was an article of faith amounting to an ideology. In its influence and scientific unsoundness it can only be compared in this century to Marxism, especially Marxist economics. Like Marxist economic theories, these race theories have also been fully exploded. The emergence of Molecular Genetics has shown these race theories to be completely false.

By creating this 'Aryan' fable, Europeans of the Age of Enlightenment sought to free themselves from their Jewish heritage. It is interesting to note that this very same theory—of the Aryan invasion and colonization of Europe, was later applied to India and became the Aryan invasion theory of India. In reality it was nothing more than a projection into the remote past of the contemporary European experience of colonizing Asia and Africa. Substituting *European* for *Aryan*, and *Asian* or *African* for *Dravidian* will give us a description of any of the innu-

merable colonial campaigns in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. According to this theory, the Aryans were carbon copies of the colonizing Europeans. When seen in this light the theory is not even particularly original.

The most potent effect of these ideas was on the psyche of the German people. The most powerful political movement of the nineteenth century Europe was German nationalism. The idea of the Aryan race made a very significant contribution to this German nationalistic movement. We are now used to regarding Germany as a rich and powerful country, but German people at the beginning of the nineteenth century were weak and divided. There was no German nation at the time; the map of Europe then was dotted with numerous petty German principalities and dukedoms that had always been at the mercy of the neighbouring great powers—Austria and France. For more than two centuries, from the time of the Thirty Years War to the Napoleonic conquests, the great powers had marched their armies through these petty German states with scant regard for their people or their rulers. It was very much in the interests of the French to keep the German people divided, a tactic later applied to India by the British.

Every German at the time believed that he and his rulers were no more than pawns in the great power rivalries. In this climate of alienation and impotence, it is not surprising that German intellectuals should have sought solace in the culture of an ancient exotic land like India. Some of us can recall a very familiar sentiment among the Americans during the era of Vietnam and the Cold War, with many of them taking an interest in Eastern religions and philosophy. These German intellectuals also felt a kinship towards India as a people subjugated like themselves. Some of the greatest German

intellectuals of the era such as Humbolt, Frederick and Wilhem Schlegel, Schopenhauer and many others were students of Indian literature and philosophy. Hegel, the greatest philosopher of the age and a major influence on German nationalism, was fond of saying that in philosophy and literature, Germans were the pupils of Indian sages. Humbolt went so far as to declare in 1827: 'The *Bhagavadgita* is perhaps the loftiest and the deepest thing that the world has to show.' This was the climate in Germany when it was experiencing the rising tide of nationalism.

Whereas the German involvement in things Indian was emotional and romantic, the British interest was entirely practical, even though there were scholars like Jones and Colebrooke who were admirers of Sanskrit and its literature. Well before the 1857 uprising it was recognized that British rule in India could not be sustained without a large number of Indian collaborators. Recognizing this reality, influential men like Thomas Babbington Macaulay, who was the Chairman of the Education Board, sought to set up an educational system modelled along British lines that would also serve to undermine the Hindu tradition. While not himself a missionary, Macaulay came from a deeply religious family steeped in the Protestant Christian faith. His father was a Presbyterian minister and his mother a Quaker. He believed that the conversion of Hindus to Christianity held the answer to the problems of administering India. His idea was to create an English educated elite that would repudiate its tradition and become British collaborators. In 1836, while serving as the chairman of the Education Board in India, he enthusiastically wrote his father:

Our English schools are flourishing wonderfully. The effect of this education on the Hindus is prodigious....

...It is my belief that if our plans of

education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence. And this will be effected without any efforts to proselytize, without the smallest interference with religious liberty, by natural operation of knowledge and reflection. I heartily rejoice in the project.

So religious conversion and colonialism were to go hand in hand. The key point here is Macaulay's belief that 'knowledge and reflection' on the part of the Hindus, especially the Brahmins, would cause them to give up their age old belief in favour of Christianity. In effect, his plan was to turn the strength of Hindu intellectuals against them, by utilizing their commitment to scholarship in uprooting their own tradition. His scheme was to educate the Hindus to become Christians and turn them into collaborators. But it is a measure of his seriousness that Macaulay persisted with the idea for fifteen years until he found the money and the right man for his utopian idea.

In pursuit of this goal he looked for someone who would translate and interpret Indian scriptures, especially the Vedas, in such a way that the newly educated Indian elite would see the differences between them and the Bible and choose the latter. Upon his return to England, after a good deal of effort he found a talented but impoverished young German Vedic scholar, by name, Frederick Max Müller, who was willing to undertake this arduous task. Macaulay used his influence with the East India Company to find funds for Max Müller's translation of the *Rig-Veda*. Though an ardent German nationalist, Max Müller agreed for the sake of Christianity to work for the East India Company, which really meant the British Government of India. He also badly needed a major sponsor for his

ambitious plans, which he at last found. This was the genesis of his great enterprise, the editing of the *Sacred Books of the East*. But there can be no doubt at all regarding Max Müller's commitment to the conversion of Indians to Christianity. Writing to his wife in 1866 he observed:

It [the *Rig-Veda*] is the root of their religion, and to show them what the root is, I feel sure, is the only way of uprooting all that has sprang from it during the last three thousand years.

Two years later he also wrote the Duke of Argyll, then Secretary of State for India: 'The ancient religion of India is doomed. And if Christianity does not take its place, whose fault will it be?'

The facts therefore are clear: like Lawrence of Arabia in this century, Max Müller, though a scholar, was an agent of the British government paid to advance its colonial interests. But he remained an ardent German nationalist even while working in England. This helps explain why he used his position as a recognized Vedic and Sanskrit scholar to promote the idea of the 'Aryan race' and the 'Aryan nation', both favourite slogans among German nationalists. This of course was to reach its culmination in the rise of Hitler and the horrors of Nazism in our own century. Although it would be absurd to blame Max Müller for it, he, as an eminent scholar of the Vedas and Sanskrit, does bear a heavy responsibility for the deliberate misuse of a term in response to the emotion of the moment. He was guilty of giving scriptural sanction to the worst prejudice of his or any age. It was like using the word 'Christian' to describe the anti-Semitism of the Nazis. Not everyone however was guilty of such abuse; Wilhem Schlegel, no less a German nationalist, always used the word 'Arya' to mean honourable and never in a racial sense. Max Müller's delib-

erate misuse of the term may be pardonable in an ignoramus, but not in a scholar of his stature and reputation.

Much is now made of the fact that Max Müller later repudiated the racial aspects of the Aryan theory, claiming it to be a linguistic concept. But this again had more to do with the winds of change in European politics than science. Britain had been watching the progress of German nationalism with rising anxiety, which burst into near hysteria in some circles when Prussia crushed France in the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. This led to German unification under the banner of Prussia. Suddenly Germany became the most populous and powerful country in Europe and the greatest threat to British ambitions. There was a widespread belief among British Indian authorities that India and Sanskrit studies had made a major contribution to German unification. Sir Henry Maine, a former Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University and an advisor to the Viceroy echoed the sentiment of many Englishmen when he said: 'A nation has been born out of Sanskrit.'

This obviously was an exaggeration, but to the British, still reeling from the effects of the 1857 revolt, the spectre of German unification being repeated in India was very real. Max Müller however found himself in an extremely tight spot. Though a German he was now comfortably established in England, in the middle of his lifework on the Vedas and the *Sacred Books of the East*. His youthful flirtation with German nationalism and the Aryan race theories could now cost him dear. With his background as a German nationalist, the last thing he could afford was to be seen as advocating German ideology in Victorian England. He had no choice but to repudiate his former theories simply to survive in England. He now had to do something to distance himself from German nationalistic theories and ideology.

His solution to the predicament he found himself in was to hastily propound a new 'linguistic theory' of the Aryan invasion in opposition to the previous one about the 'Aryan nation'. So, in 1871, the year of Ger-

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man unification, the culmination of the century long dream of German nationalists, Frederick Max Müller marched into a university in German-occupied France and dramatically denounced the German doctrine of the Aryan race. And just as he had been an upholder of the Aryan race theory for the first twenty years of his career, he remained a staunch opponent of it for the remaining thirty years of his life. It is primarily in the second role that he is remembered today, except by those familiar with the whole history.

Let us now take a look at this famous theory. It was first an Aryan invasion theory of Europe created by Europeans to free themselves from the Jewish heritage of Christianity. This led eventually to Hitler and Nazism. This theory was later transferred to India, where it got mixed up with the study of Sanskrit and European languages. Europeans, now called Indo-Europeans, became the invading Aryans and the natives became the Dravidians. The British hired Max Müller to use this theory to turn the Vedas into an inferior scripture, to help turn educated Hindus into Christian collaborators. Max Müller used his position as a Vedic scholar to boost German nationalism by giving scriptural sanction to the German idea of the Aryan race. After German unification, British public and politicians be-

came scared and anti-German. At this, Max Müller, worried about his position in England, got cold feet and wriggled out of his predicament by denouncing his own former racial theory and turned it into a linguistic theory. In all of this, one would like to know, where was science?

The fact that Europeans should have concocted this scenario which by repeated assertion became a belief system is not to be wondered at. They were trying to give themselves a cultural identity, entirely understandable in a people as deeply concerned about their history as modern Europeans. It is also understandable that the theory should have found favour with the British. It was a very convenient tool for them to justify their own role by claiming the Aryans also to be colonists. But how to account for the tenacious attachment to this fiction that is more propaganda than history on the part of 'establishment' Indian historians? It is not greatly to their credit that modern Indian historians have failed to show the independence of mind necessary to subject this colonial-missionary model of Indian history to a fresh examination and come up with a more realistic version of history.

But once we drop this fiction based on

Biblical superstitions, European politics and the career concerns of individuals like Max Müller, what we obtain by a fresh examination is not only a new version of Indian history, but also a window on the ancient world, a world before the dawn of civilizations. When viewed without these nineteenth century prejudices, ancient Indian records combined with modern scientific methods reveal a fascinating world, the true seat of ancient civilizations—the Vedic land from the Indus to the Ganges. It also goes to

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answer a long-standing question of great historical interest—to wit, why people from India and Sri Lanka to England and Ireland have, since time immemorial, spoken languages clearly related to one another. This is what we can look at in the next section.

(to be continued)

The Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad

(Continued from page 561)

continually doing *śubha-karma* (good deeds), and create a fund of good fruits called *adr̥ṣṭa*, which will give us a joyful life with the gods in heaven. The second *Muṇḍaka* initially praises this approach, but at the end points

out the fallacy in such a thinking, so that we are brought back to *jñāna-kāṇḍa* as the only way out of this quagmire of the world.

(to be continued)

Synopsis of Question-Answer Sessions

SWAMI NIKHILESWARANANDA

The questions were put by students and answered by the Swami (a monk of our Order residing at Ramakrishna Ashrama, Rajkot, Gujarat, and editor of the Order's Gujarati journal, Ramakrishna Jyot) during meetings organized by the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, in educational institutions in this region. These functions were a kind of meet-the-youth programme held in connection with the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's participation in the World Parliament of Religions, Chicago, 1893.

During these well-attended meetings, in which the students' enthusiasm was much in evidence, select books on Swami Vivekananda's life and teachings were distributed free to encourage the participants to study further Swamiji's contribution to the country and to humanity.

Q.: *How to increase self-confidence?*

(A student of the Polytechnic, Lohaghat, Pithoragarh, U.P.)

A.: According to psychologists, we should develop PMA (Positive Mental Attitude) and avoid NMA (Negative Mental Attitude) in order to develop self-confidence. Various methods have been suggested to develop this PMA. I will give you a simple method, which has been tried out by many students. Read the books of Swami Vivekananda for at least 15 minutes, particularly before going to bed at night. You may start with a small book, 'Thoughts of Power', which is a collection of his powerful ideas selected from the eight volumes of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*.

Many students wrote to me that they did not believe reading books develops self-confidence. But after regularly reading the books of Swami Vivekananda for a few months, they have started getting self-confidence. However, remember that Swamiji's books are to be read not only with the eyes but also with the mind. Sutapa Ghosh, a 3rd year Chemical Engineering Student from Sindhri Engineering College, Bihar, wrote to me saying that her self-confidence increased

only when she actually began applying her mind seriously to the text of Swamiji's book and using his words of advice to guide her life. So, read the books of Swami Vivekananda carefully and regularly, particularly before going to bed at night. Within a few months you will find your self-confidence increasing.

A young man hailing from a rural area was suffering from lack of self-confidence. After reading the books of Swami Vivekananda, he got over his inferiority complex which was mainly due to his poverty. He started taking students for tuition and became self-dependent. Later on, his personality developed to such an extent that, when he was called for an interview by a pharmaceutical firm, he got selected from among sixty candidates even though he was the youngest of them all. His outstanding performance ensured that within two years his firm sent him abroad for further training. Within five years he got four gold medals for his excellent performance, and today he is the Regional Sales Manager of that firm. (—Shri Harpal Vala of Blue Cross Ltd., Rajkot.)

Another boy I know had an ambition to

become a body-builder, but lacked self-confidence. Once he came across a sentence of Swami Vivekananda, 'Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached.' He got charged, read more books and began to exercise with more confidence. Two years ago he was adjudged the best body-builder in the whole state of Gujarat. (—Shri Sachin Rajput of Vill. Dharampur, Dist. Valsad, Gujarat.)

A college girl used to study hard but did not get good results in examination, as she lacked confidence. After reading the books of Swami Vivekananda, she developed so much confidence that she got gold medal in M.A. (Psychology) in 1993 from the Saurashtra University. (—Ms. Tejal Nasit of Rajkot.)

So try this method and apply yourself seriously. This will ensure the development of self-confidence from within you.

Q.: How can we increase our will-power?
(A student of the Central School, Pithoragarh, U.P.)

A.: The golden formula for increasing will-power is: 'Start with the minimum and practise the easiest.' Prepare a list of the difficult activities which give you the impression that you have less will-power. Out of these activities choose the one that appears to you the least difficult. Start doing that work without bothering about repeated failures. But be careful that you start with the minimum. For example, if you find it difficult to sit at your study table for two hours at a stretch, make a resolution that you will study at least for one hour without getting up from your seat. Do it regularly for a couple of weeks. This will give you the self-confidence that you can sit at your study table at a stretch for an hour. Now increase the time by half an hour. After two weeks of successfully implementing this, you can try to sit for two hours at a stretch. After this achievement you will feel tremendous self-confidence and your will-power will also

increase.

Q.: What is the main source of getting success in life?

(A student of the GIC, Champavat, Pithoragarh, U.P.)

A.: According to Emerson, 'The key to success in trade, commerce, war and in every management of human affairs is concentration of the mind'. The secret of success of all great players, musicians, artists and others is concentration of the mind, which they attained by hard work and constant practice. The secret of success of the towering personality of Swami Vivekananda also was his power of concentration of mind. Once he was reading the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in his room at Belur Math. His disciple Sharat Chakravarti saw the big volumes and exclaimed that it was difficult for any one to read all those books in one's lifetime. Swami Vivekananda said, 'What do you mean? I have already finished ten volumes. If you wish, you may ask me any question from the first ten volumes.' The disciple asked many questions and Swamiji gave correct replies to all the questions, sometimes even quoting the language of the book. The disciple was amazed and wanted to know the secret of this extraordinary power. Swamiji replied that it was due to his power of mental concentration which came from the purity of his mind.

During his second visit to the West, Swami Vivekananda was passing over a bridge; he saw a few cowboys trying to shoot at egg shells which were floating on water flowing below. Seeing that the shoots were going wide and missing their targets, Swamiji could not help smiling. The cowboys got irritated and told Swami Vivekananda, 'So you laugh at us! Let us see you shoot at these egg shells.' Thus saying they handed over a gun to Swamiji. Swamiji took the gun and shot all the egg shells at the very first attempt. The cowboys were astonished and exclaimed, 'Is it a miracle?' Swamiji re-

plied, 'No, it is not a miracle. It is a power derived from concentration of the mind.' So, with the power of concentration success can be achieved in any field.

Q.: Just now you said that, concentration of mind comes from purity of mind. But how to get that purity of mind?

(A student of the GIC, Champavat.)

A.: Purity of mind can be cultivated by filling our mind constantly with pure thoughts. By regular meditation, prayer and study of good books, gradually our mind will become pure. We will have to take care of our *āhāra* (intake). *Āhāra* does not mean the food that we eat through our mouth, but it also means whatever we take in through our eyes, ears, etc. You remember the message conveyed by the three monkeys—which Mahatma Gandhiji was fond of quoting—'See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.' Do not see bad things, do not listen to bad things, do not speak ill of others.

One of our senior Swamijis had gone to Switzerland. There by the side of a lake he saw a strange representation of those three monkeys. One of the monkeys had one eye

open and the other closed. The second monkey had one ear open and the other closed. The third monkey had half his mouth open and half closed! At first he could not understand the meaning, because till that day he had seen the monkeys depicted with two eyes closed, two ears closed and mouth closed. He wondered what the meaning of this picture could be. Then he remembered a śloka from the Vedas:

*Bhadraṇi karṇebhiḥ śṛṇuyāmadevāḥ,
bhadraṇi paśyemākṣabhiryajatrāḥ...*

'May we listen to auspicious things, may we look at auspicious things, etc.' So we should take in good *āhāra* through our eyes, ears, etc. and avoid bad food, e.g. avoid seeing bad pictures over the T.V. and look only at good pictures. Avoid listening to criticism of others and listen to good things. Avoid speaking ill of others and speak only good things, etc. We should cultivate pure thoughts in every possible manner. Gradually our mind will become pure. That will improve the concentration of mind and also help us in spiritual development. □

Ramakrishna Embraced Them

(Continued from page 570)

carriage. One of them was Ramlal, a nephew of Sri Ramakrishna, who used to give me prasād at the Master's command at Dakshineswar.²

3. Sri Ramakrishna's direct disciple Swami Vijnanananda's account

'One day (Janmashtami, Krishna's birthday, 18 August 1884), Girish Ghosh came to visit the Master at Dakshineswar. I was also there. That evening Girish sang a song to the Master from his play, 'Chaitanya-

lila'.

O Keshava, bestow thy grace upon thy luckless servant here.

O Keshava, who dost delight to roam Vrindaban's glades and groves!'

The Master out of ecstasy embraced Girish and sat on his lap. Tears of joy rolled from the Master's eyes. After a while Girish left for Calcutta.³ □

2. Ibid. pp. 372-3. (Italics by the present writer.)

3. Ibid. p. 247.

Practical Vedanta

Educating the Deprived*

Sarat Chandra writes about a unique school at the Bhubaneswar railway station for neglected children.

A train hisses in, stirring expectant passengers on the platform who move about helter and skelter, with coolies who keep pace balancing luggage on their heads. And hawkers break into deafening noise. But a school on the platform number four of Bhubaneswar railway station with about 30 students goes on with its routine as though oblivious to the noise and din that has broken out. This school on the platform is named appropriately the 'Ruchika Station Branch'.

It is not only a school with a difference; it is a school with a mission. And a unique feature of the school is that its classes are held on the railway platform, all through the year!

Of course the classes attract curious onlookers. They find ill-clad students, hopping and singing, with teachers showing them how to. Not only is the place, a hub of noise and din, unusual, but the teaching also adopts the play-way method, usually not found in other Oriya medium schools. About 30 students, under the tutelage of three lady teachers, learning the basics of education on a platform is quite a sight.

'Ruchika Station Branch' is quite different from 'Ruchika' the English medium school in another part of the town, where only children from affluent families can afford to study. To this platform school come the beggar children, rag-picking urchins and children from the slum-dwellers. It is an assemblage of the neglected, who are abandoned to destiny while so young, even by their very families.

'It is with a scheme for their future that the platform school was started', says Mrs. Inderjit Khurana, the Principal of 'Ruchika' and the real brain behind it all.

A middle-aged woman, Inderjit is soft-spoken and urbane, yet lively and vivacious. A progeny of Punjabi parents, she was born in Lucknow, but brought up in Jamshedpur where her father worked in the steel factory. After her schooling in the steel city, she had her college education in Isabella Thoburn College of Lucknow. Soon after graduation (that was about thirty years ago) she entered matrimony. But how did the idea of taking the school to the railway station come to her mind?

The lady mentions of a two-fold influence. She recalls her four-day stay in 1976 at Kosbad of Maharashtra where she was participating in a workshop for teachers. The venue was Gram Bal Siksha Kendra, a premier institute of its kind meant for the tribal and rural folk, founded by Tarabai Modak. Decades ago, Tarabai ventured to teach the tribals of Maharashtra. Instead of urging the tribals to come to school, she took the school to their hamlets! Tarabai filled educational materials in two buckets and set out to initiate the tribals into literacy, all alone. Her dedication paid off and her mission became a great success.

Almost like Tarabai, on April 7, 1985, Mrs. Khurana went out to platform number one

* Courtesy, *The Hindusthan Times*, Delhi.

of the Bhubaneswar railway station, with materials stuffed in a cloth bag she carried on her shoulder. Aim: to educate the beggar children loitering about on the platforms, picking rags and feeding on leftovers. With her was a colleague, Mr. Rameswari Prasad Dwibedy, who also carried a similar cloth bag. Their bags were stuffed with colour chalk, picture books, colour pencils, white papers, chocolates, a piece of body-soap and a towel.

They found a lone boy, about nine years old, loitering about in front of the R.M.S. office. He was given the soap, to wash himself clean at the nearby water-tap. A girl who was ragpicking was also spotted. Mrs. Khurana helped her to wash her hair. Mr. Dwibedy went in search of the idlers to all the four platforms and around the ticket booking counters. He found more than 10 beggar children, some of them asleep on the uncovered station floor. They were told of the many attractive things that the Madam had for them, waiting near the R.M.S. office.

Each was given a soap and towel. After they washed themselves clean, the real programme started. The children were given colour pencils and white papers to draw whatever they liked. They were given picture books from which stories were told to them. They also participated in action-songs in which the themes of the songs were interpreted with physical gestures. On that first day, the initiation session for the first 15 children continued till late in the afternoon.

This was repeated on the following Sunday; and the second day drew more children than the first. So it continued and became a regular feature at the Bhuban-



Saturday shower for the urchins

eswar railway station. But the action-song periods had been drawing a crowd; even some railway employees gathered to see the children. Hence the railway authorities requested Mrs. Khurana to shift her classes to platform number four, which is less busy and not so crowded. The Sunday classes thereafter were held at a particular place on platform number four. Then, from 14 July 1985, 'Ruchika Station Branch' became regular, classes being held six days a week from 6.30 to 9.30 in the morning. Sixty students were enrolled.

Not all were beggar children. It was a motely group of beggar children, ragpickers and slum-dwellers' children. The children were divided into four age groups; three-plus age group, five-plus age group, seven-plus age group and nine-plus age group. Apart from Mr. Dwibedy, three more teachers were appointed for the school at nominal salaries. As the school progressed, some more students also joined in, as there was no time bar for admission. Actually, no rigid discipline is imposed; students can come to attend the classes at any time during school hours between 6.30 and 9.30 in the morning. They may also leave the classes at any time, though such habits are not encouraged, and with the help of puppet shows suitable themes are developed to tell the students the ills

of begging. Many do leave, because the beggar children still depend upon begging for a living.

The teachers try their best to make the classes as interesting as they can. Two boxes full of material are taken to the platform school every day. In the boxes are carried slates, four pieces of roll-up black boards, books donated by the State Council of Educational Research and Training, inexpensive but educative toys, puppets, chalk, colour pencils and some medicines for the students. On the floor of a platform where thousands traverse, some of these materials help create a classroom atmosphere for children whom the society regards as pests.

There are two preparatory classes before a student is promoted to standard one. Classes are held six days a week, and there is no summer vacation for the school. On Saturdays they have a slightly different routine though. The students that day are given a good bath and their hair washed and combed.

Life in the cities is very complex for these deprived children. Principal Khurana's aim is to equip her students so that they are self-reliant and survive in the cut-throat atmosphere of the city. In this context Mrs. Khurana speaks of the other influence in her platform school concept. Tarabai Modak operated in a rural area which is predominantly tribal. But how to work for the neglected children in the cities? Her own younger sister, Miss Bimaljit Dua, has been her guiding spirit in this respect. For the uncared-for slum urchins of Chandigarh, Bimaljit started a school in 1979 and ran it single-handedly for three years. That effort awakened Inderjit to a realization: that Bimaljit tried to do for the uncared-for city children what Tarabai Modak did for the rural poor. Bimaljit's motto, 'Charity alone doesn't work; self-esteem and self-reliance must be activated', is also Mrs. Khurana's motto: she wants her students to grow into responsible human beings: self-reliant and socially useful.

Support for the cause, however slight, has also come in many forms with the passage of time. The Orissa Milk Producers' Cooperative Federation provides a glass of milk to each student on four of the working days. A bakery in Bhubaneswar provides a few slices of bread every day to each student and the *maida* donation for the same comes from another donor.

Scores of uncared-for children who would have otherwise remained illiterate were initiated into the basics of education in the Ruchika platform school. After leaving the school, most of them pursued some useful profession in life; and a few even developed self-confidence to venture into small-time cottage industries. Sushanta is one such who sells *Chatua* (an edible made of wheat, rice and sugar). Two serve as hotel-boys in Oberoi, Bhubaneswar, and Swosti. Chandramani, still another student, has become a peon. Then there is Devaraj, who having spent a major part of his life as a trans-state beggar, is now

Ruchika Station Branch made a significant leap forward in January 1993 when it expanded into eight more branches in various parts of Orissa, namely, Puri, Jatni, Delanga, Cuttack, Vani Vihar, Mancheswara, Baranga and Sakhi Gopal. Even so Inderjit Khurana's ambition of exploring new horizons is still going stronger. She says: 'Educating the socially deprived must become a movement in India, and the existing government infrastructure like school buildings and bus stands must be used. There is no other way to educate our vast number of child labourers.' This statement makes the lady principal of Bhubaneswar a symbol of hope. ■

News & Reports

Vedanta Society of Sacramento

1337 Mission Avenue

Carmichael, California 95608, U.S.A.

A SHORT REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1995

This Society was started as a branch of The Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco. Affiliated in 1952, it became an independent Centre in 1970. Swami Shraddhananda is the Swami-in-charge and is assisted by Swami Prapannananda.

The Swami-in-charge was ill throughout the year, so the Assistant Swami conducted the Sunday Services and the Wednesday evening classes on the Vedanta Scriptures. The Saturday morning Satsangs were conducted by the Swami-in-charge while the evening classes on Ramakrishna and Vivekananda literature were conducted by either of the Swamis. Daily worship in the Chapel, vesper service on Sunday and group meditation were held. Interviews with students and spiritual aspirants were given by the Swamis. The Assistant Swami gave several lectures outside the Society, most of them in Davis and Fresno cities.

The Society has a monastery, a library, a reading room and a commodious bookshop. Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda as also Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Jagaddhatri Puja, Janmashtami, Shiva Ratri, Christmas, etc. were celebrated with joy and solemnity. The Santodyan (The Garden of Saints)—having two beautiful ponds and statues of Sri Krishna, Shiva, Shankaracharya, Sri Chaitanya, Moses, St. Francis of Assisi, and Guru Nanak—a serene retreat at the back of the property, was extensively used by many seekers for mental peace and tranquillity. □

Religious harmony

Every year, the great *ratha yatra* of Lord Jagannath in Puri halts briefly at the modest *samadhi* of a 17th century Muslim saint-poet named Salbeg. Behind this unusual gesture of respect lies the fascinating story of one of Lord Jagannath's most ardent devotees.

Born in Orissa in 1592, Salbeg was the son of a Moghul nobleman and a Brahmin woman. He was seriously injured while fighting the Afghans and legend has it that his wounds miraculously healed after he prayed to Lord Krishna. A grateful Salbeg then set up a *math* near the Jagannath temple—Jagannath being a form of Krishna—and spent the rest of his life composing *bhajans* in

praise of Jagannath, Krishna and other Vaishnava deities. Indeed, Salbeg's Oriya *bhajans* are among the finest Vaishnava devotional songs ever composed.

Since Salbeg was not a Hindu, he was not allowed to enter the Jagannath temple. The only time he could get the *darshan* of the Lord was during the annual *ratha yatra*. One year, though, Salbeg was on his way back to Puri from a pilgrimage to Vrindavan when the *ratha yatra* began. Despite praying fervently to Lord Jagannath not to deny him his yearly *darshan*, Salbeg still hadn't returned by the time the Lord's *rath* reached the *math*. Then, according to local belief, the Lord performed another miracle for Salbeg—no matter how hard they tried, hundreds of elephants and thousands of men could not move the chariot. Only when Salbeg arrived and pulled the chariot's ropes was the *ratha yatra* able to resume. And so, after Salbeg's death, Lord Jagannath's *rath* has always halted at his *samadhi*.

—Saba Naqvi Bhaumik, *Indian Express*

Sunday Magazine

Wealth gap is widening

The gap between the world's rich and poor has widened so much that the 358 richest people own more than the combined annual incomes of nearly half the globe's population, according to a UN agency.

'The world has become more economically polarized,' said the United Nations Development Programme in its annual report on human development slated for official release.

If nothing is done, at this rate the annual income of the poorest in 2030 will amount to \$325 per capita while income in industrialized countries will reach some \$40,000. □

Atlas will remind China of humiliations by foreigners

China said it would publish an atlas of shame depicting its humiliation by powerful nations over the past century. The atlas will contain more than 100 maps, with charts and explanations of how world powers have had their way with the 'middle kingdom,' beginning with the first Opium War in 1840. The atlas will be divided into five sections:

■ Western powers' use of force to make the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) give up territory and pay indemnities.

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Reviews & Notices

VIVEKANANDA: A NEO-PERSPECTIVE:
Ed. Santi Nath Chattopadhyay; publ.
Manan Prakashan, 30 Bidhan Sarani,
Calcutta 700 006; 1995; pp. 106; Rs. 100/-.

This book, says the editor, aims 'at discussing the modern relevance of Swami Vivekananda from intercultural perspectives'. It has twelve essays by Eastern and Western scholars, and two eminent monks of the Ramakrishna order—Swami Lokeswarananda and Swami Prabhananda. Lokeswaranandaji's views on Swamiji's 'philosophy' set, as it were, the tone of the book. 'Like the great Buddha,' he says, 'Swamiji was not so much interested in speculative philosophy as in its application for human welfare.' 'To serve man and God' was the aim of this philosophy.

The other essays discuss Swamiji's thoughts from 'new' perspectives. Among these the editor's essay on Swamiji's 'Philosophy of Human Freedom' uncovers some basic analogies between Marx and Swamiji. Quoting from Soviet explications of Swamiji, Dr. Chattopadhyay demonstrates the fact that Swamiji went beyond the Marxists. He points out that, 'Vivekananda...explains the creative states of the individual and his collective of social existence in the background of the synthetic development of the idea of divinity as the introduction of unity in life and existence in different degrees.'

Another interesting aspect emerges in the article by Professor Yeager Hudson. He uncovers several common concerns between Swamiji and the pragmatism of William James, Josiah Royce, and other American thinkers. He says that James, like Swamiji, saw 'philosophy as a tool for practical living'. This affirmation of the sacred in terms of the secular is a new approach to be carefully adopted by nations. A related perspective emerges in Prabhanandaji's closely reasoned article on the humanistic relevance of Swamiji's educational philosophy. He rightly points out that, for translating Swamiji's views on education into action, 'we shall need to bring about radical changes in the infrastructure, thinking and orientation of the prevailing educational systems through sound experimentation.' In fact, he outlines 'a psychometric model' which offers a comprehensive approach combining 'achievement in academic, physical and value-oriented'

aspects. This demands the closest scrutiny and implementation by educationists.

The other essays are, also, of great interest to the student of Swamiji's thought. Written by distinguished Vivekananda scholars such as Amiya Kumar Majumdar, Shibajiban Bhattacharya, Santwana Dasgupta and others, the book is of great interest for all of us concerned with the logistics of implementing Swamiji's models of development.

A welcome addition to the quantum of valuable literature on Swamiji.

Dr. M. Sivaramakrishna
Hyderabad

STUDIES IN MIMAMSA: Dr. Mandana Mishra Felicitation Volume: Ed. R.C. Dwivedi; publ. Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U.A. Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007; 1994; pp. 435; Rs. 395/-.

Mimamsa is one of the most important *upāṅgas* of the Indian philosophical systems. Emphasizing the *karma-niarga*, Mimamsa is, in a sense, a complementary dimension of Vedānta. Mimamsa has its origins in the *sūtras* of Jaimini, the *bhāṣya* of Sabara, and the *vartika* of Kumarila Bhatta. As the great sage Sri Chandrasekhara Saraswati has put it in his characteristically insightful, integral way, 'what Mimamsa regards as the end, the Vedānta regards as the means to an end.' Indeed, even etymologically, it means something of a technique, an exegetical structure of great fascination to the contemporary mind; for, Mimamsa is 'esteemed or sacred enquiry'.

Studies in Mimamsa is, happily, in the tradition of Mimamsa. Formally, a volume in honour of one of the most esteemed figures in the world of Sanskrit scholarship, Professor Mandana Mishra, 'known for his basic intellectual interest in Mimamsa', it is, in fact, a substantial enquiry into the different aspects of Mimamsa. The aim, as the learned editor R.C. Dwivedi (whose own outstanding work, specially in Alankāra and Kashmir Saivism, has received a sad end with his demise in 1993) says, of the essays in this volume is to take Mimamsa 'out of its traditionally narrow confines of ritualistic interpretation of the Vedic sentences, and make it part of the global

philosophy of language and religion'. It has an impressive editorial advisory board including Professor Hajime Nakamura, author of the celebrated *Ways of Thinking of Eastern People*.

The volume emerging from such stalwarts is, in every sense of the word, a substantial contribution reflecting the finest scholarship of both East and West. (Articles in Sanskrit show how live and vibrant Sanskrit is, in spite of oft repeated reservations about its viability for modern contexts.) Divided into three sections: 'Philosophy, Epistemology, Ethics', 'Language, Meaning, Grammar', and finally, 'Hermeneutical Essays', the volume has 25 essays of uniformly closely reasoned, extremely contemporary evaluations in those areas of continuing significance.

In a volume so rich and wide-ranging, to mention a few is both spatial exigency of a review and the individual incapacity to be comprehensive in a review. The introduction by G.B. Bhatt (his exposition of Kumarila in *The Six Ways of Knowing* remain an invaluable work), placing 'Mimamsa as a Philosophical System', is a marvel of lucid exposition of the basis of the system. Among comparative studies, I would like to specially commend the comparison of the concept of truth of Kumarila Bhatta and Karl Popper by Lars Goehler. The notions of 'error and falsification' (implicitly or 'truth') are analysed in a cogent way to show that, in spite of cultural specificity, 'it is a remarkable fact that Kumarila Bhatta, in a special point, evolved philosophical ideas, 13 centuries in advance, that resemble very much that of a well-known 20th century philosopher.'

Similarly, fresh ground is struck by Purushottam Bilimoria in his remarkable essay, 'Autpattika: The Originary Signifier-Signified Relation in Mimamsa and Deconstructive Semiology'. Taking the work of Saussure and, later, of Derrida, Prof. Bilimoria builds up an impressive argument to show that the paradox of negation of foundational, originary narratives in Derrida 'could be read in similar terms' of *autpattika* both 'as being *originary without having an origin*.' Indeed, this essay needs to be examined in depth, for, a lot of follow-up work is sustained by this kind of seminal enquiry.

A comparable freshness is evident in the essays by Harold G. Coward (his *Derrida and Indian Philosophy* still remains the most seminal in the pioneering comparative studies) and Albrecht Wezler. While Coward discusses Kumarila and Bhartrihari in the context of word-meaning, Bhartrihari figures again in the essay by Johannes Bronkhorst. Wezler points out that the translation of *varna* as letter is highly misleading, for, 'the Indian teaching is entirely founded in the

spoken word' as against the European on 'letter'. 'Indian tradition' in this respect 'evidently...surpasses its European counterpart in a remarkable manner.'

Among other essays, I should like to mention Francis X. Clooney's brilliant arguments 'to retrieve in detail the foundations of Vedanta in Mimamsa exegesis'. In fact, the discussion is found at length in his *Theory After Vedanta* (Albany: SUNY, 1993), where he rightly points out that, 'Advaita discourse is modelled on the Mimamsa paradigm. Though claiming to be a step beyond Mimamsa, for the most part it acts in continuity with its admitted predecessor; if it introduces some concepts and practices incompatible with Mimamsa and claims also to supersede it, even these claims are made according to the norms of Mimamsa thinking.' (p. 25.)

All in all, the volume beautifully produced and intelligently edited, reflects contemporary concerns in philosophy, language and hermeneutics in a magnificent way. Here is a book worthy of the great scholar to whom it is offered, and indispensable for everyone in the increasingly daunting task of making Indian thought visible in this ethos of post-modernist, deconstructive thought. Highly recommended.

Dr. M. Sivaramakrishna

ADHUNIK DRISTITE VIVEKANANDA
(Bengali): Ed. Santi Nath Chattopadhyay; publ. Manan Prakashan, 30 Bidhan Sarani, Calcutta 700 006; 1994; pp. 131; Rs. 50/-.

Vivekananda's *Complete Works* provide modern thinkers with material for inexhaustible interpretation. His speeches and writings expound the lessons he learnt at the feet of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, whom he considered 'a living commentary on the Vedas and the Upanishads'. The depth of Vivekananda's insights, the novelty of his expression, the great variety, flexibility and openness of his outlook are all viewed from different perspectives to underline their contemporary relevance, and an attempt is made to appropriate the ideas and ideals he expounded.

The present book is an attempt of this nature. As the title suggests, the book undertakes to provide a 'modern' look at Vivekananda. It is a collection of essays by well-known scholars who have done considerable work in the field of Vivekananda-Vedanta studies. The essays are divided into three sections covering a wide range of attitudes and opinions of the contributors, all

of them closely associated with the tradition of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.

Section one deals with Philosophy, Man and Society; section two is on Aesthetics and the National Aesthetic Revolution; the last section takes up Science and Social Welfare.

The first section has two articles: the first of these is by Prof. A.K. Mazumdar on 'Vivekananda's Vedanta Philosophy and Vedantic Socialism', in which he suggests that Vivekananda appropriated the essence of Advaita Vedanta. Prof. Mazumdar highlights the following points: Vivekananda's exposition of *maya* is given importance. God is manifest in every form of existence on earth. Sri Ramakrishna's injunctions to serve humanity with the same commitment as one would have for serving God, and seeing every individual as God find practical application in Vivekananda. Practical Vedanta is a form of socialism: integration between individual and collective freedom, resulting from a battle to eradicate social evils. The second essay in this section is on 'Vivekananda's Humanistic Philosophy' by Dr. S.N. Chattopadhyay. The essay expresses Vivekananda's view that, imbalance in the human personality is due to oppression and rigidity arising from external situations. Marx's views on awakening the proletariat is not shared by Vivekananda, because he says it is not enough to raise the downtrodden—what is crucial is to give them the wherewithal to cultivate those traits which they lack. This is spiritual humanism, which the author designates as a creative mode. Vivekananda's humanism is seen as the culmination towards which the social-political-philosophical discussions going on both in the West and the East are tending.

The second section contains three articles: Prof. S.K. Nandi, in his article 'Aesthetic View of Vivekananda', discusses in detail the concept of *vairāgya* and its impact on the aesthetic dimension of life, with special emphasis on music, a field in which Vivekananda excelled. The next essay, also on Vivekananda's aesthetic outlook, is by Dr. Satyajit Chaudhury. In it the author relates aesthetics to value, and uses Vivekananda's parameters to evaluate art, for instance, of the famous artist, Ravi Varma. The third of the essays in this section is by Prof. Sankari Prasad Basu. His area is, 'Swami Vivekananda and the National Art Movement', which discusses the origin and evolution of Indian art and the role of Western aesthetics in this process. This article has devoted some space to the problems and prospects of the National Art Movement. The final section of the essay has extensive quotations from Sri Aurobindo's famous essay, 'The Significance of Indian Art'. The author says that

Vivekananda's aesthetic views are in consonance with the national philosophy of art. By following these, and not by merely copying the West, artists such as Abanindranath have built up the National Art Revolution.

In section three there are four articles: Swami Purnatmananda gives in his essay Vivekananda's view of religion and human existence. He puts forward the idea that Vivekananda's spiritual outlook defines dharma as religion that gives courage to individuals, teaches self-control and destroys bestiality. Abdul Jalil Miya's essay structures an interreligious dialogue. He speaks of Vivekananda's religion and philosophy of human welfare, and of the advent of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda which has historical reasons and future implications. For acquiring divine knowledge the first step, according to Swamiji, was for the individual to awaken his inner self. Swami Vivekananda's views are seen as similar to those found in Islam.

The next essay is on the historic and social perspective of the Chicago Address and the genesis of the Chicago Parliament of Religions by Tarun Sanyal. Finally there is an essay on the scientific temper and consciousness of Vivekananda by Gobinda Chandra Bandyopadhyay, who speaks about the scientific basis of Vivekananda's spirituality: his scientific consciousness reflects his vision of unity; and the strong points in his convictions are his dependence on logic and reason.

The volume has some new insights and is a valuable addition to the literature available on Vivekananda. It makes a worthwhile contribution to the interpretation of the thoughts of Vivekananda from various angles.

Dr. Sumita Roy
Hyderabad

WESTERN WOMEN IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: *Editorial adviser,*
Pravrajika Atmaprana; publ. Secretary,
Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, New
Delhi; 1995; pp. 209; Rs. 88/-.

In an age which is making indiscriminate use of Vivekananda as a model for various kinds of ideology, the 'real' Vivekananda, with his endearing individual traits, is difficult to grasp and retain. In an ethos where responses range from total veneration and adulation to thinly veiled mistrust—for instance, it is considered activist and radical to quote him frequently or keep his

portrait on one's table—, one can guess how far the original information about Vivekananda has become obscured by the passage of time in the clouds of 'hero worship' or otherwise.

For those interested in learning about the person who reached such spectacular heights of achievement the present volume is of great interest. It not only speaks of Vivekananda's impact on people—Western women in the present context—but also of the silent and imperceptible influence these people had on that fairly unknown young Indian who went to the West with the message of Vedanta and 'conquered' all he surveyed.

The volume has an impressive range of portraits: from women disciples such as Nivedita to others, such as Betty Leggett, who offered him their warm affection and hospitality, and those who respected him without accepting all he said as the ultimate truth—as for instance, Sarah Farmer, who 'did not consider herself a Vedantin, nor a follower of Swamiji. She was a sister and co-worker in bringing to others the ideal of spiritual freedom.' (p. 98.)

The biographical sketches of fifteen western women and their association with Swamiji—which began during his first visit to the West and in some cases continued in India, and also left an unerasable memory of that association—is the subject of the volume under review. The essays are arranged in a chronological sequence corresponding to the time of the meeting of these women with Swamiji.

The essays were originally published in *Samvit*, the English Journal of the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission brought out bi-annually. Obviously, such a collection cannot be expected to have a uniformity that would have made the volume acquire cohesion. Apart from this minor flaw, the effort to bring out the essays in this more enduring book-form, rather than to leave them to languish within the covers of the journal, has indeed been very fruitful.

There is an impressive range of contributors and therefore a variety in treatment: Pravrajika Prabuddhaprana has four sensitive essays on Kate Sanborn, Sara Bull, Sarah Farmer and Josephine MacLeod; the editor Pravrajika Atmaprana has written an inspiring piece on 'Sister Nivedita's Discipleship'; Pravrajika Amalaprana's article providing some rare glimpses of Swamiji's wit and jovial nature is on 'Betty Leggett—Swamiji's Caring Hostess'; similar are the pieces on 'Roxie Blodgett, A Motherly Hostess' and 'Mrs. John J. Bagley, A Champion of Swamiji', both by Dr. D.K. Chakravorty; Swami Vidyatmananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna

Order, has written about Ida Ansell—Ujjvala; Dorothy Madison on Sarah Fox; S.N. Bhattacharya, on 'Charlotte Sevier's Dedication', speaks about the genesis and nurturing of the Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati in the Himalayas; Sourish Bhattacharya has written about 'Alice Mead Hansborough: An Appreciation'; the Hale family's closeness with Swamiji is poignantly brought out by Nancy Auer Falk in her piece, 'Ellen Hale and Her Family'; Boshi Sen's contribution on Sister Christine, and Marimala Das's on 'Sarah Ellen Waldo—The Servant of the Lord' completes the list.

After reading some of these sensitive sketches, one is left with a sensation of having met Swamiji in person. For those of us who were deprived by an accident of history from having any personal contact with Swamiji, such volumes are of immense interest.

The book is, significantly, dedicated to Sister Gargi, Marie Louise Burke, whose monumental work, *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries*, provides much of the material for the above essays. Also, as Pravrajika Atmaprana's Preface says: 'She has indeed, since 1950, walked on the trail left by the footsteps of Swami Vivekananda. She has forged ahead these forty-five years to reveal an inspiring and magnificent image of Swami Vivekananda in the West. Her sincerity of purpose and perseverance, her humility and self-effacement are exemplary.' This makes the reviewer wish that the portrait of such a person had been added to further enrich the volume.

Dr. Sumita Roy

News & Reports

(Continued from page 596)

use of force to make the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) give up territory and pay indemnities.

■ Intensification of foreign powers' invasion of China.

■ Start of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–5.

■ Theft of Chinese rights and resources by imperialist powers.

■ Japanese war of aggression against China of 1937–45. □